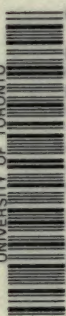


HEROINES OF  
THE MODERN STAGE

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SARAH BERNHARDT



# HEROINES OF THE MODERN STAGE

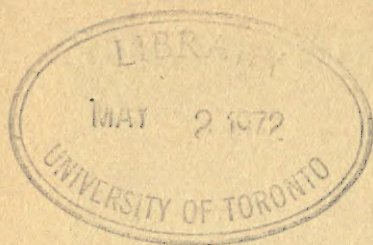
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## PREFACE

The following pages give some account of those actresses who stand out today as the most interesting to an English-speaking reader. The Continental actresses included are those who gained international reputations and belonged to the English and American stage almost as much as to their own.

All actresses have been modern, in a sense, for the acting of female rôles by women is distinctly a latter-day touch in that ancient institution, the theatre.<sup>1</sup> Thus a book on modern actresses might range from Elizabeth Barry to Mrs. Fiske. But while many volumes already exist that serve well to keep alive the names of the dead-and-gone heroines,<sup>2</sup> biographies of actresses whom we of today have seen, are, in general, insufficient or inaccessible. That is true even of such notable women as Sarah Bernhardt, Ada Rehan and Mrs. Fiske; while accounts in English of such Continental actresses

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix: *The First English Actresses*, and *The Change in the Actor's Social Status*.

<sup>2</sup> For the lives of actresses of earlier days the reader is referred to the bibliography at the end of the volume. The

as Duse and Réjane are altogether lacking. The author hopes that in these chapters he has done something toward making better known the careers of those actresses and of others who present themselves either in vivid recollection or in the light of present day achievement. The concluding chapter deals briefly with a number of American actresses of the present, who, although not rising in all cases to the eminence or popularity attained by those to whom separate chapters are given, yet have made some distinct contribution to our stage.

The author's thanks are due to Mr. Edwin F. Edgett for the loan of material; to Mr. John Bouvé Clapp and to Mr. Robert Gould Shaw for the use of the originals from which some of the illustrations were made; and, for assistance of many kinds, to the editor of the series.

Boston, Massachusetts,  
October, 1915.

F. I.

outstanding names are: Elizabeth Barry, 1658-1713; Anne Bracegirdle, 1663-1748; Anne Oldfield, 1683-1730; Catherine Clive, 1711-1785; Hannah Pritchard, 1711-1768; Susannah Maria Cibber, 1714-1766; Margaret Woffington, 1720-1760; Mary Porter — d. 1765; George Anne Bellamy, 1731-1788; Frances Abington, 1737-1815; Sarah Siddons, 1755-1831; Mary Robinson ("Perdita") 1758-1800; Dorothy Jordan, 1762-1816; Frances Anne Kemble, 1809-1893; Charlotte Cushman, 1816-1876; Helena Faucit, 1817-1898; Rachel Felix,

1821-1858; Adelaide Ristori, 1822-1906; Francesca Janau-scheck, 1830-1904; Adelaide Neilson, 1846 (?) -1880.

Some of the names in this list are, of course, among the greatest in theatrical history. In Anne Bracegirdle and Elizabeth Barry the Restoration rejoiced in two actresses of the first order. "Bracey" was the Ada Rehan of her day, a blithe creature of comedy who seems to have possessed the temperament and the charms of the typical born actress. Cibber called her "the *Cara*, the Darling of the Theatre." She excelled in the comedies of Congreve, but she was versatile, and played also in tragedy. Elizabeth Barry was England's first great tragic actress. She was of the august, severe, *tragedienne* type that was later exemplified in Siddons and Ristori, and that has nowadays, with the decline of the poetic drama, virtually disappeared. With these women, and with a number of others,—some of whom, like Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Verbruggen, were skilled actresses,—the standard was surprisingly early set high.

Anne Oldfield charmed the England of Addison and Steele with a versatility and brilliance of acting that has never been surpassed. She acted with great majesty and fire in the tragedies of the day,—such as *Cato* and *The Distressed Mother*,—while in comedy she "played with the enthusiasm of a child." There is much in the sunny amiability, the volatile, zestful personality and the wide-ranged equipment of "Nance" Oldfield to remind one of that modern actress,—Ellen Terry,—who often herself impersonated Mistress Oldfield.

One thinks again of Terry in reading of Margaret Woffington. "The Woffington" was a beauty, a hard worker, an adept in comedy, and only less successful in tragedy. She played captivatingly the rakish Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's *The Constant Couple*; she was notably good in parts as diverse as Sylvia in *The Recruiting Officer* and Cordelia in *Lear*; but the parallel to Ellen Terry appears when we read of her lovely Portia and of her Rosalind (a part that Terry was born to play, but somehow never tried). "Peg" Woffington was one of that long line of geniuses with whom Ireland has continued to enrich the English theatre, from her day and Sheridan's down to that of Ada Rehan, Bernard Shaw and Sygne.

Frances Abington, a person of temper and caprice, but a true daughter of comedy nevertheless; Dora Jordan, who was really two Dora Jordans,—“one the whimsical, hoydenish performer, all laughter, or the delineator of graceful sentiment,—



the other, only seen off the stage, a shrewd little woman, of kind heart and exquisite sensibility"; Mary Robinson, the "Perdita" of him who was to be George IV of England, and a graceful, appealing actress of the tenderly comic and of such characters as Viola and Rosalind—the Julia Marlowe of the eighteenth century; such are hints of a few of those women who have continued the line of gifted actresses of comedy and sentiment down from the days of Bracegirdle and Oldfield.

For commanding figures in tragedy, for the Duses and Bernhardtts of earlier days, we must look, as a rule, outside of England and America. There is, to be sure, always Sarah Siddons, a majestic figure, a veritable Queen of Tragedy, who made her characters—such as Lady Macbeth and Queen Katherine—awe-inspiring even to those who acted with her. Her niece, Frances Ann Kemble, was prevented from being a truly great actress only by a dislike for the stage. As it was, with her Juliet, her Belvidera in *Venice Preserved*, and her Julia in *The Hunchback* she takes her place in that succession of tragic actresses which, with the change in theatrical fashions, has now ceased, and which has had its best exemplars on the Continent rather than in England.

In Charlotte Cushman, America produced a tragic actress of commanding dignity and power. She was "a noble interpreter of the noble minds of the past," a stately and vigorous woman, unique as Meg Merrilies, and a powerful and poetic interpreter of Shakespeare's tragic women.

The daughter of a Jew, Rachel Felix was a Parisian by birth, and thus far she was an earlier Bernhardt. In the thrilling intensity of her acting and in the capricious imperiousness of her own nature, she again suggests Madame Sarah. She introduced a measure of naturalness of speech and spontaneity of action into the French theatre, and here her influence was like that of Duse.

The rise of Adelaide Ristori spelled the decline of the great Rachel. In her earnestness, in her choice of plays, in the quiet dignity of her life and nature, Ristori is recalled by that later great Italian, Duse. And just as Duse invaded Paris and rivaled the reigning queen of the stage there, so (only more successfully) did Ristori when she replaced Rachel in French esteem. Ristori's parts, however, suggest rather Bernhardt, though in general all four actresses—Rachel, Ristori, Bernhardt and Duse—have worked in the same *metier*. Ristori's great parts were Medea, Francesca,

Myrrha, Lady Macbeth, Phédre, Marie Stuart and Queen Elizabeth.

Janauscheck, "the last of the actresses of the 'grand style,'" born in Prague and for years a successful *tragedienne* in Germany, anticipated Modjeska by her adoption of America and the English tongue. She too was an heroic woman, who impressed her generation by the intensity and sincerity of her acting, her wonderful voice, and the dignity she lent her profession. Her best parts were in *Bleak House*, *Brünnhilde*, *Medea* and *Marie Stuart*.

Adelaide Neilson, a womanly and gracious personality, an ideal Juliet, and a Shakspearean actress who as Viola, Imogen and Rosalind foreshadowed and combined many of the merits of Modjeska, Rehan and Marlowe, died in the ripeness of her youth and ability.





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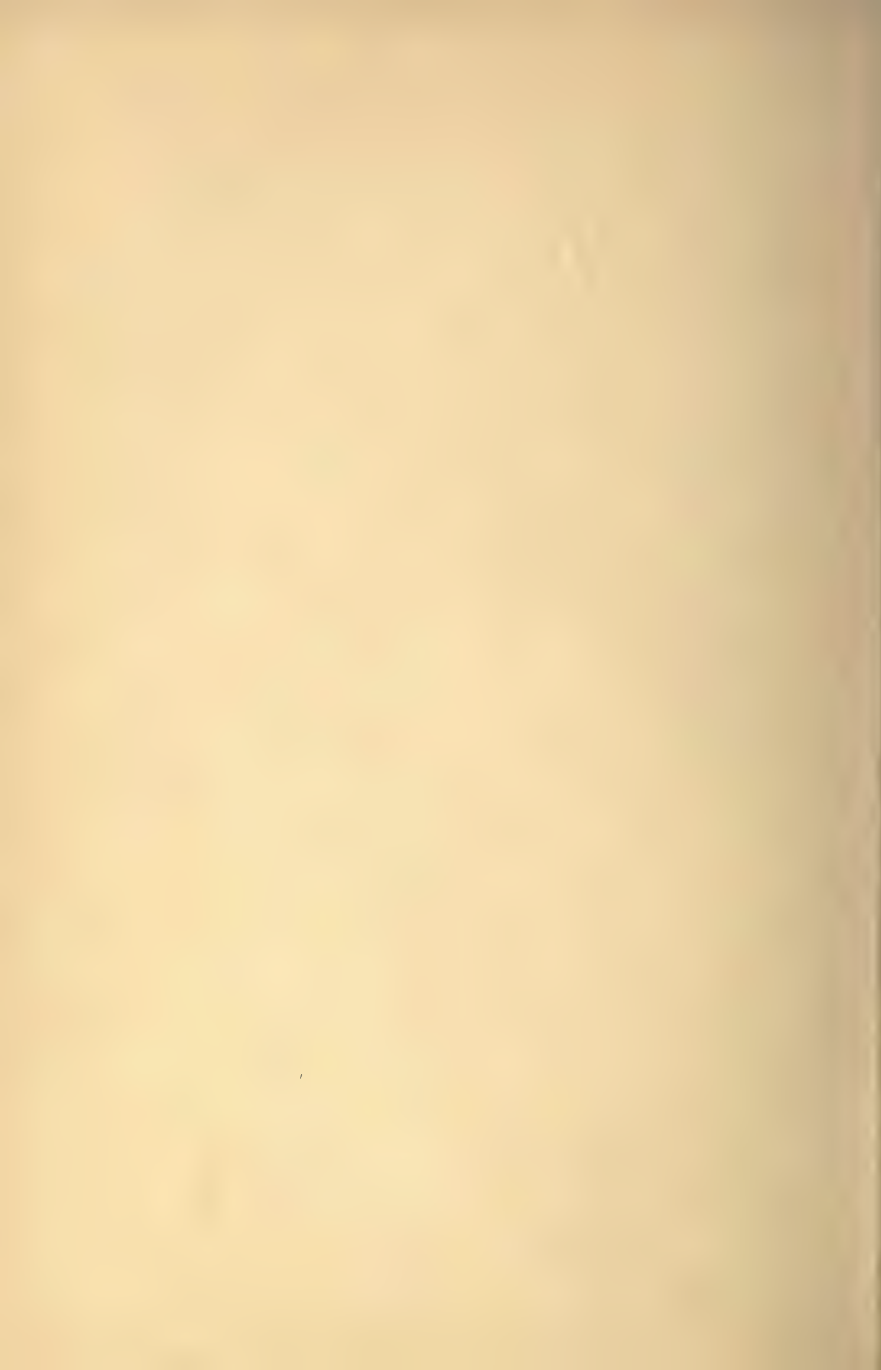
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**HEROINES OF THE  
MODERN STAGE**





# HEROINES OF THE MODERN STAGE

## SARAH BERNHARDT

“**S**ARAH-BERNHARDT, *Officier d'Académie, artiste dramatique, directrice du théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt, professeur au Conservatoire;*” so run the rapid phrases of the French “Who’s Who.” And, it might have added: “personality extraordinary, and woman of mystery.”

“The impetuous feminine hand that wields scepter, thyrsus, dagger, fan, sword, bauble, banner, sculptor’s chisel and horsewhip—it is overwhelming.” Thus the poet Rostand epitomized “the divine Sarah.” Her career, he said, gives one the vertigo—it is one of the marvels of the nineteenth century. And he might have added, of the twentieth, for Bernhardt, who began her stage career at the time of our Civil War, was only recently, at an amazing age, to be seen on the stage of London and Paris. There are many who think, with William Winter,<sup>1</sup> that she has been merely “an accomplished

<sup>1</sup> *The Wallet of Time.*

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executant, an experienced, expert imitator, within somewhat narrow limits, of the operations of human passion and human suffering." The fact remains, the woman has been a genius of work and achievement, "the Lady of Energy," who has fairly earned the title of great actress. It is difficult to think of any woman the light of whose fame has carried to the ends of the earth in quite the same way. To be sure it has not always been from the lamp of pure genius. There have been self-advertising, scandal, extravagant eccentricity, to swell the general effect, but back of all this has been the worker.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "All these things that I have known only in the telling—all these journeys, these changing skies, these adoring hearts, these flowers, these jewels, these embroideries, these millions, these lions, these one hundred and twelve rôles, these eighty trunks, this glory, these caprices, these cheering crowds hauling her carriage, this crocodile drinking champagne—all these things, I say, astonish, dazzle, delight, and move me less than something else which I have often seen: this—

"A brougham stops at a door; a woman, enveloped in furs, jumps out, threads her way with a smile through the crowd attracted by the jingling of the bell on the harness, and mounts a winding stair; plunges into a room crowded with flowers and heated like a hothouse, throws her little beribboned handbag with its apparently inexhaustible contents into one corner, and her bewinged hat into another, takes off her furs and instantaneously dwindles into a mere scabbard of white silk; rushes on to a dimly lighted stage and immediately puts life into a whole crowd of listless, yawning, loitering folk; dashes forward and back, inspiring every one with her own feverish energy; goes into the prompter's box, arranges her scenes, points out the proper gesture and intonation, rises up in wrath and insists on everything being done over again; shouts with fury; sits down, smiles, drinks tea and begins to rehearse her own part; draws tears from case-hardened actors who thrust their enraptured heads out of the wings to watch

She was born in Paris, at 265 *Rue St. Honoré*, October 23, 1844.<sup>3</sup> Her blood is a mingling of French and Dutch-Jewish. Her real name is Rosine Bernard, and she was the eleventh of fourteen children. Of her father

her; returns to her room, where the decorators are waiting, demolishes their plans and reconstructs them; collapses, wipes her brow with a lace handkerchief and thinks of fainting; suddenly rushes up to the fifth floor, invades the premises of the astonished *costumier*, rummages in the wardrobes, makes up a costume, pleats and adjusts it; returns to her room and teaches the *figurantes* how to dress their hair; has a piece read to her while she makes bouquets; listens to hundreds of letters, weeps over some tale of misfortune, and opens the inexhaustible little chinking handbag; confers with an English *perruquier*; returns to the stage to superintend the lighting of a scene, objurgates the lamps and reduces the electrician to a state of temporary insanity; sees a super who has blundered the day before, remembers it, and overwhelms him with her indignation; returns to her room for dinner; sits down to table, splendidly pale with fatigue; ruminates her plans; eats with peals of Bohemian laughter; has no time to finish; dresses for the evening performance while the manager reports from the other side of a curtain; acts with all her heart and soul; discusses business between the acts; remains at the theatre after the performance, and makes arrangements until three o'clock in the morning; does not make up her mind to go until she sees her staff respectfully endeavoring to keep awake; gets into her carriage; huddles herself into her furs and anticipates the delights of lying down and resting at last; bursts into laughing on remembering that some one is waiting to read her a five-act play; returns home, listens to the piece, becomes excited, weeps, accepts it, finds she cannot sleep, and takes advantage of the opportunity to study a part! This is the Sarah I have always known. I never made the acquaintance of the Sarah with the coffin and the alligators. The only Sarah I know is the one who works. She is the greater."—Edmond Rostand, in *Sarah Bernhardt*, by Jules Huret.

<sup>3</sup> The correct date and place, according to the official record of the *Conservatoire*. The year has sometimes been given 1845. Some accounts have given Holland, others Havre, as the birthplace. Sarah herself says Paris.

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hardly anything can be learned. Sarah herself says that when she was still a mere baby he had gone to China, but why he went there she had no idea. Her mother was, by birth, a Dutch Jewess, by sympathy a Frenchwoman, by habit a cosmopolitan; "a wandering beauty of Israel," forever traveling. As much because there was no home, therefore, as because the French have a custom of banishing infants from the household, Sarah spent her childhood in the care of a foster-mother, first in the Breton country, near Quimperlé (where she fell in the fireplace and was badly burned), then at Neuilly, near Paris. Her mother came seldom to see her, though there seems to have been affection, at least on the child's side. It was a lonely childhood—made worse by the high-strung, sensitive nature that was Sarah's from the beginning.<sup>4</sup>

When Sarah was seven she was sent away to boarding school at Auteuil, where she says she spent two comparatively happy years. Her mysterious father then sent orders that she was to be transferred to a convent. "The idea that

<sup>4</sup> At Neuilly her aunt Rosine came one day to see her. "I insisted that I wanted to go away at once. In a gentle, tender, caressing voice, but without any real affection, she said all kinds of pretty things. She then went away. I could see nothing but the dark, black hole which remained there immutable behind me, and in a fit of despair I rushed out to my aunt who was just getting into her carriage. After that I knew nothing more. I had managed to escape from my poor nurse and had fallen down on the pavement. I had broken my arm in two places and injured my knee cap. I was two years recovering." *Memoirs*.



I was to be ordered about without any regard to my own wishes or inclinations put me into an indescribable rage. I rolled about on the ground, uttering the most heartrending cries. I yelled out all kinds of reproaches, blaming mamma, my aunts, and Mme. Fressard for not finding some way to keep me with her. The struggle lasted two hours, and while I was being dressed I escaped twice into the garden and attempted to climb the trees and throw myself into the pond, in which there was more mud than water. Finally, when I was completely exhausted and subdued, I was taken off sobbing in my aunt's carriage."<sup>5</sup>

At the Augustinian convent at Grandchamp, Versailles, she was baptized and confirmed a Christian. She became extravagantly pious and conceived a passionate adoration of the Virgin. Nevertheless, she was fractious and was more than once expelled.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Memoirs.*

<sup>6</sup> "One day, when we heard that all the schools in France, except ours, had been given bonbons on the occasion of the baptism of the Prince Imperial, I proposed to several other girls that we should run away, and I undertook to manage it. Being on good terms with the sister in charge of the gate, I went into her lodge and pretended to have a hole in my dress under the armpit. To let her examine the hole I raised my arms toward the cord communicating with the gate, and whilst she was looking at my dress I pulled the cord, my accomplices rushed out, and I followed them. Our entire stock of provisions, ammunition, and sinews of war consisted of a few clothes, three pieces of soap in a bag, and the sum of seven francs fifty centimes in money. This was to take us to the other end of the world! A search had to be made for us, and as the good sisters could hardly undertake it, the police were set on our track. There was not much difficulty in finding us,

When she left the convent Sarah was a capricious, sensitive, religious girl, who must indeed have constituted a problem for her mother. Sarah, strangely enough, was herself strongly inclined to be a nun. But her mother, who was a woman of the world and of means, had other plans and provided as "finishing governess" for Sarah a Mlle. de Brabander. One day, when she was fifteen, her fate was decided for her. At a family council her own ambition to be a nun was voted down and the decision was: "Send her to the *Conservatoire*." Sarah had never even heard of the famous school for actors of the government theatres. That same evening she was taken to the theatre for the first time—the *Théâtre Français*. *Britannicus* and *Amphitrion* moved her profoundly, and she left the theatre weeping, as much for the sudden shattering of her cherished plan as from the effects of the plays.

Thus she began her studies at the *Conservatoire* (1860) with no love for the career chosen for her.<sup>7</sup> She was no beauty;—she was decid-

as you may imagine. I was sent home in disgrace. On another occasion, I had climbed on to the wall separating the convent from the cemetery. A grand funeral was in progress and the Bishop of Versailles was delivering an address. I immediately began to gesticulate, shout and sing at the top of my voice so as to interrupt the ceremony. You can imagine the scene—a child of twelve sitting astride a wall, and a bishop interrupted in the midst of a funeral oration! The scandal was great."—Huret.

<sup>7</sup> "Consequently I entered the *Conservatoire*. The next question was, in which class was I to study? Beauvallet said: 'She will be a *tragedienne*.' Regnier maintained: 'She will be a *comédienne*,' and Provost put them in agreement by de-

edly thin, had kinky hair, and a pale face. But she worked hard. Her extraordinary nervous energy and her intelligence had their effect and when she left the *Conservatoire* she had won two second prizes.<sup>8</sup> The discernment of some of the judges<sup>9</sup> saw in her something of the artist she was to be, and she immediately had a call to the company of the *Comédie Française*. With the signing of her contract came her resolve, that if the stage were to be her working place, she would throw herself into her task with all her soul. "*Quand-même*,"—in spite of all,—was already her motto,—she would, in the face of any obstacle, win a place for herself.<sup>10</sup>

Though with wonderful success she has been busily pursuing that object from that day to

claring: 'She will be both.' I joined Provost's class."—Huret.

<sup>8</sup> One for tragedy in 1861, and one for comedy in 1862. She never won a first prize.

<sup>9</sup> M. Regnier and M. Doucet among them. Both had been her teachers, as had M. Provost and M. Samson, the latter of whom had taught Rachel.

<sup>10</sup> She says she had chosen this device at the age of nine, "after a formidable jump over a ditch which no one could jump, and which my young cousin had dared me to attempt. I had hurt my face, broken my wrist and was in pain all over. While I was being carried home I exclaimed furiously: 'Yes, I would do it again, *quand-même*, if any one dared me again. And I will always do what I want to all my life.' In the evening of that day, my aunt, who was grieved to see me in such pain, asked me what would give me any pleasure. My poor little body was all bandaged, but I jumped with joy at this, and quite consoled I whispered in a coaxing way: 'I should like to have some writing paper with a motto of my own.' My mother asked me rather slyly what my motto was. I did not answer for a minute, and then, as they were all waiting quietly, I uttered such a furious '*Quand-même*!' that my Aunt Faure started back muttering: 'What a terrible child!'"

this, the beginnings of her career were not promising. Her début (1862) in Racine's *Iphigénie* created no particular comment. She remembers, however, that on that occasion, when she lifted her long and extraordinarily thin arms, for the sacrifice, the audience laughed.<sup>11</sup> Other parts fell to her, but she did not long remain at the House of Molière. As other managers were later to learn, Sarah cared little for agreements and contracts.

The occasion of her first desertion of the *Comédie* was trivial enough. Here at the great national theatre she expected to remain always, but one day her sister trod on the gown of Mme. Nathalie, another actress of the company, "old, spiteful and surly," who in petty anger shoved the girl aside. Sarah promptly responded by boxing the ears of her elder colleague. Neither would apologize, and the quickly achieved result was that the younger actress retired.

She remained away from the *Comédie Française* for ten years, and it was during this time that she laid the foundation of her fame. Brief engagements at the *Gymnase*<sup>12</sup> and the *Porte*

<sup>11</sup> The great critic Sarcey's comments in *L'Opinion Nationale* were read to her by her mother: "Mlle. Bernhardt, who made her début yesterday in the rôle of Iphigénie, is a tall, pretty girl with a slender figure and a very pleasing expression. The upper part of her face is remarkably beautiful. She holds herself well, and her enunciation is perfectly clear. This is all that can be said for her at present." "The man is an idiot," said her mother, "you were charming."—*Memoirs*.

<sup>12</sup> Characteristically, she brought her engagement at the *Gymnase* to a sudden close by quietly going to Spain the day after the first performance of a play in which she disliked her part.



*St. Martin* were followed by an opportunity to join the company at the *Odéon*. MM. Chilly and Duquesnel were the managers. The latter was young, kind to Sarah, and discerning of her talents. As for Chilly, he was less enthusiastic: "M. Duquesnel is responsible for you. I should not upon any account have engaged you."

"And if you had been alone, monsieur," she answered, "I should not have signed, so we are quits."

Mlle. Bernhardt's career—once she had launched herself upon it—divides naturally into three periods: the six years (1866-1872) at the *Odéon*, the playhouse of the Latin Quarter, "the theatre," she says, "that I have loved most"; another term (1872-1880) at the *Française*; and her long career since, during which she has been her own mistress, accepting engagements where it pleased her, managing theatres of her own, and traveling over all the world.

Her first taste of success came when she played Zacharie in *Athalie*, soon after she went to the *Odéon*. It fell to her to recite the choruses, and the "*voix d'or*" won its first triumph. She was now twenty-two. For four years, with plentiful interludes of temper and temperament, she had been striving for success. Now, at the *Odéon*, she worked and worked hard. "I was always ready to take any one's place at a moment's notice, for I knew all the rôles." Chilly, who at first could see only her

thinness<sup>13</sup> and not her ability, was brought round to Duquesnel's view of her. "I used to think," she says again, "of my few months at the *Comédie Française*. The little world I had known there had been stiff, scandal-mongering, and jealous. At the *Odéon* I was very happy. We thought of nothing but putting on plays, and we rehearsed morning, afternoon, and at all hours, and I liked that very much."<sup>14</sup>

At the *Odéon* Sarah soon became the favorite of the students of the *Quartier*. Rather to the disgust of the older patrons of the house, the students were indiscriminate in their appreciation of the young actress, and applauded her indifferent work equally with her successes.

For successes she now began to have. With difficulty M. Chilly was induced to consent to the production of Coppée's one-act play *Le Passant*. But so successful was it that it not

<sup>13</sup> Thin she was, and thin she remained. She once said, in after years: "As for me, if I should cease to be thin, what would become of some of the Paris journalists? Scarcely a day but they have some *mot* about me personally. Really I am almost the *raison d'être* of some of these small wits!"

<sup>14</sup> She played at the *Odéon*: Albine in *Britannicus*; Sylvia in *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard*; Zacharie in *Athalie*; the Baroness in *Le Marquis de Villemer*; Mariette in *François le Champi*; Hortense in *Le Testament de César Girodôt*; Anna Damby in *Kean* (Dumas' Sullivan); in *La Loterie du Mariage*; Zanetto in *Le Passant* by Coppée; in *L'Autre* by George Sand; Armande in *Les Femmes Savantes*; Cordelia in *King Lear*; in *Le Bâtard*; *L'Affranchi*; Jean-Marie, by Andre Theuriet; *Les Arrêts* by de Boissières, *Le Legs*; *Le Drame de la Rue de la Paix*; *Fais ce que dois*, by Coppée; *La Baronne* by Edmond and Foussier; *Mlle. Aïsse*; and the Queen of Spain in *Ruy Blas* by Victor Hugo.

only ran for a hundred nights, but Bernhardt and the beautiful Mlle. Agar played it for Napoleon and Eugénie at the Tuileries. In *Kean*, by Dumas, she was, by all accounts, admirable.<sup>15</sup>

George Sand came to the *Odéon* for the rehearsals of her play *L'Autre*. Of her Bernhardt says: "Mme. George Sand was a sweet charming creature, extremely timid. She did not talk much but smoked all the time."

In the midst of her term at the *Odéon* came an astonishing episode in Bernhardt's career—her activities during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. The theatres were of course closed, but it was not in her nature to sit still and do nothing. Therefore she sent her young son<sup>16</sup> out of the city, and in the fall of 1870, after her own severe illness, proceeded to establish an army hospital in the foyers of the *Odéon*, with herself as its working head. With an executive ability and a zeal characteristic but none the less remarkable, she not only organized its

<sup>15</sup> On the first night of Dumas' play, the distinguished author was the victim of a remarkable demonstration by the audience. He sat in a box with "Oceana." The novelist's alliance with this woman was evidently unpopular, for a great shout was sent up and many in the audience were heard to call for the woman's removal. In the midst of the uproar the play, already long delayed, was begun. The woman finally left the house. The *Figaro* next day said: "Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt appeared wearing an eccentric costume, which increased the tumult, but her rich voice—that astonishing voice of hers—appealed to the public, and she charmed them like a little Orpheus."

<sup>16</sup> Now about five. Although she was a mother Sarah had not yet married.

## 14 HEROINES OF THE MODERN STAGE

commissariat, and kept all the records and accounts, but herself acted as one of the nurses. The section of her autobiography that deals with the siege of Paris and with her journey through the enemy's country to Hombourg and back that she might bring home her family, will afford some future historian a graphic impression of one of the saddest days in the history of Paris.

When the *Odéon* reopened, in the fall of 1871, Sarcey, the great critic, said of Sarah, who played (in *Jean-Marie*) a young Breton girl: "No one could be more innocently poetic than this young lady. She will become a great *comédienne*, and she is already an admirable artist. Everything she does has a special savor of its own. It is impossible to say whether she is pretty. She is thin, and her expression is sad, but she has queenly grace, charm, and the inexpressible *je ne sais quoi*. She is an artist by nature, and an incomparable one. There is no one like her at the *Comédie Française*."

At the end of 1871 Victor Hugo, who had been practically an exile during the Empire, came back to France. His return, as it proved, meant another turning point in Sarah's life, for when the *Odéon* decided to produce his *Ruy Blas*, she was selected, after a good deal of bickering, as the Queen. Hugo she found, despite her strong previous prejudice against him, "charming, so witty and refined, and so gallant."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Mme. Bernhardt tells a rather pretty story of the great



The play was produced on January 26, 1872. That night, in Bernhardt's own words, "rent asunder the thin veil which still made my future hazy, and I felt that I was destined for celebrity. Until that day I had remained the students' little Fairy. I became then the elect of the Public." Hugo himself, on his knee, kissed her hands and thanked her. M. Sarcey, who from the beginning was Bernhardt's staunchest admirer among the critics, praised her warmly: "No rôle was ever better adapted to Mlle. Bernhardt's talents. She possesses the gift of resigned and patient dignity. Her diction is so wonderfully clear and distinct that not a syllable is missed."

The *Comédie Française* now made overtures for her return to its fold. Bernhardt at once

novelist: "One day when the rehearsal was over an hour earlier than usual, I was waiting, my forehead pressed against the window pane, for the arrival of Mme. Guérard, who was coming to fetch me. I was gazing idly at the footpath opposite, which is bounded by the Luxembourg railings. Victor Hugo had just crossed the road and was about to walk in. An old woman attracted his attention. She had just put a heavy bundle of linen down on the ground and was wiping her forehead, on which were great beads of perspiration. In spite of the cold, her toothless mouth was half open, as she was panting and her eyes had an expression of distressing anxiety, as she looked at the wide road she had to cross, with carriages and omnibuses passing each other. Victor Hugo approached her, and after a short conversation, he drew a piece of money from his pocket, handed it to her, then taking off his hat he confided it to her and, with a quick movement and a laughing face, lifted the bundle to his shoulder and crossed the road, followed by the bewildered woman. The next day I told the poet that I had witnessed his delicate, good deed. 'Oh,' said Paul Maurice, 'every day that dawns is a day of kindness for him!'"

accepted, which was wretchedly unfair to the *Odéon*, for she owed much to Duquesnel. When in 1866 he persuaded Chilly to take her on, she was comparatively unknown; now, in 1872, she was rapidly becoming the talk of Paris. Her contract with the *Odéon* had yet a year to run, but Sarah demanded, as the condition of her remaining, an advance in the stipulated salary.<sup>18</sup> Chilly indignantly refused; so Mlle. Bernhardt hurried away to the *Comédie* and forthwith signed her new contract. The *Odéon* brought an action against her and she had to pay a forfeit of six thousand francs.

This sudden change of scene is but one instance of the directness, not to say unscrupulousness, of Bernhardt's methods in advancing herself. "*Quand-même*" it was to be, at any cost. If she had merely followed her inclinations, however, she would probably have remained at the *Odéon*, for she has often protested the attraction for her of the scene of her first triumphs. The *Comédie*, on the other hand, had never this appeal to her. As is easily understood, her imperiousness and willfulness made her feel less at home at the more staid *Comédie*. The other members of her company, with a few exceptions, were unfriendly and jealous. Moreover she made almost a failure in her début (in *Mlle. de Belle-Isle*), but this was due not to stage-fright, as Sarcey guessed, but to her anxiety on seeing her mother, suddenly

<sup>18</sup> It was small enough, to be sure. Her demand was for only 15,000 francs (\$3,000) a year.

taken ill, leave the theatre. Sarcey loyally championed her early efforts, though he was often keenly critical also: "I fear," he wrote (apropos of *Dalila*), "that the management has made a mistake in already giving Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt leading parts. I do not know whether she will ever be able to fill them, but she certainly cannot do so at present. She is wanting in power and breadth of conception. She impersonates soft and gentle characters admirably, but her failings become manifest when the whole burden of the piece rests on her fair shoulders." Other critics, particularly Paul de Saint-Victor, were consistently hostile. She had in the company envious rivals who inspired attacks on her, and she clashed frequently with M. Perrin, the director of the theatre. With that indomitable persistence that is her finest trait, however, she kept right on, and won her way to genuine achievement. As Aricie in *Phèdre* she made a secondary part notable. Thus Sarcey: "There can be no doubt about it now. All the opposition to Mlle. Bernhardt must yield to facts. She simply delighted the public. The beautiful verses allotted to Aricie were never better delivered. Her voice is genuine music. There was a continuous thrill of pleasure among the entire audience."

That she had thoroughly arrived was soon to be proved and re-proved. *Zaire*<sup>19</sup> was fol-

<sup>19</sup> It was on the occasion of the first night of this play that she says she reverted to a trick of her childhood. Once when

lowed by Phèdre herself, Berthe in *La Fille de Roland*, Doña Sol in *Hernani*, Monime in *Mithridate*, and revivals of *Ruy Blas* and *Le Sphinx*, each a personal triumph for the actress who was so rapidly filling the eye of Paris.<sup>20</sup>

For Sarah Bernhardt had by now succeeded in making herself, if not a universally acknowledged artist, at least a real Parisian celebrity.

she had been fed something disagreeable, Sarah deliberately drank off a bottle of ink in the hope that she would die and vex her mother. Now when Perrin refused her a month's needed holiday and forced her to play Zaïre in midsummer: "I was determined to faint, determined to vomit blood, determined to die, in order to enrage Perrin. Although the rôle was easy, it required two or three shrieks which might have provoked the vomiting of blood that frequently troubled me at that time. I uttered my shrieks with real rage and suffering, hoping to break something. But my surprise was great when the curtain fell at the end of the piece, and I got up quickly to answer to the call and salute the public without languor, without fainting, ready to recommence the piece. I had commenced the performance in such a state of weakness that it was easy to predict that I should not finish the first act without fainting. And I marked this performance with a little white stone—for that day I learned that my vital force was at the service of my intellect." This is a significant passage. It helps to explain the wonder of Bernhardt's unexampled vitality in the face of hard work and a frail physique.

<sup>20</sup> She remained at the *Comédie* this time eight years, 1872-1880. Her first appearances were: Gabrielle in *Mlle. de Belle Isle*, Junie in *Britannicus*, 1872; Chérubin in *Le Mariage de Figaro*, Léonora in *Dalila*, Mrs. Douglas in *L'Absent*, Marthe in *Chez l'Avocat*, *Andromaque*, Aricie in *Phèdre*, 1873; *Peril en la Demeure*, Berthe de Savigny in *Le Sphinx*, *La Belle Paule*, Zaïre, Phèdre in *Phèdre*, 1874; Berthe in *La Fille de Roland*, Gabrielle, 1875; Mrs. Clarkson in *L'Etrangère*, Posthumia in *Rome Vaincue*, 1876; Doña Sol in *Hernani*, 1877; Desdemona in Aicard's *Othello* (once only), Alcène in *Amphitrion*, 1878; Monime in *Mithridate*, 1879; Clorinde in *L'Aventurière*, 1880.



It was not a reputation confined to the actress *per se*. Designedly or not, Sarah set the tongues of Paris (and shortly of all Europe) wagging by a continuous exhibition of eccentricity that amounts to a tradition. To mention only what seem to be well authenticated manifestations of her caprice: She kept a pearwood coffin at the foot of her bed, slept in it and learned her parts in it. It is to be the veritable coffin of her last resting place.<sup>21</sup> She kept as a further reminder of her mortality a complete human skeleton in her bedroom. Years before she had a tortoise as a household pet. She named it Chrysogère and had a shell of gold, set with topazes, fitted to its back. Now she was keeping two Russian greyhounds, a poodle, a bulldog, a terrier, a leveret, a monkey, three cats, a parrot, and several other birds. Later she had lions, and an alligator! She made ascents in a captive balloon at the Exhibition and once in a balloon that was *not* captive.<sup>22</sup> Perrin was outraged by this caprice and tried to fine her for "traveling without leave." She wrote for the newspapers. She scorned the fashions. She dabbled in painting and sculpture, and, particularly with her chisel, her efforts were, if not noteworthy, at least respectable. Indeed, a group sculpture won an honorable mention in the Salon of 1876, though

<sup>21</sup> For many years her tomb in Père Lachaise has been awaiting her.

<sup>22</sup> She published an account of these aerial experiences: *Dans les nuages; Impressions d'une Chaise*.

there were plenty to deny that it was really her work. Her studioloike apartment was the rendezvous of all artistic Paris.

In 1879 her poetic, restrained, and generally admirable impersonation of Doña Sol in *Hernani* brought her general homage. On the night of the one-hundredth performance Victor Hugo presided at a banquet in her honor, and M. Sarcey, in behalf of her "many admiring friends," presented to her a necklace of diamonds.

When it was proposed, in 1879, that the *Comédie Française* company go to London, Sarah refused to go along unless she be made Associate "*à parte entière*."<sup>23</sup> Her proposal was rejected, and at a meeting of the Committee M. Got represented the feeling that prevailed among the directors of the theatre by crying: "Well, let her stay away! She is a regular nuisance!" Sarah finally gave in, however, and in reward was made "*Sociétaire à parte entière*."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The Associates or *Sociétaires* of the *Comédie Française* are sharers in the profits, a custom that has come down from the days of Molière. A member of the company is at first a *pensionnaire*, and serves upon a salary only. After proving his worth he is made *Sociétaire*. He does not at once receive a full share of the profits, however, but must progress from an eighth, fourth and half share to the full rank of *Sociétaire à parte entière*. Bernhardt had been made *Sociétaire* in 1875. During the year 1879 the share received by the leading actors and actresses of the *Comédie* varied from 55,000 to 70,000 francs, besides their salaries. Sarah's share was 62,000 francs.

<sup>24</sup> Perrin and his fellow directors were not the only ones who felt the strain imposed by Sarah's presence on earth. She

On the first evening at the Gaiety, Bernhardt was to make her bow to England in the second act of *Phèdre*. Just before she went on she had one of her occasional bad attacks of stage fright, and could not remember her lines. "When I began my part," she wrote, "as I had lost my self-possession, I started on rather too high a note, and when once in full swing I could not get lower again; I simply could not stop. I suffered, I wept, I implored, I cried out, and it was all real. My suffering was horrible." *The Telegraph* next morning said: "Clearly Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt exerted every nerve and fiber and her passion grew with the excitement of the spectators, for when after a recall that could not be resisted the curtain drew up, Mr. Mounet-Sully was seen supporting the exhausted figure of the actress, who had won her triumph only after tremendous physical exertion, and triumph it was, however short and sudden."

An American writer—probably Henry James—said at this time in the *Nation*: "It would require some ingenuity to give an idea of the intensity, the ecstasy, the insanity, as some people would say, of curiosity and enthusiasm provoked by Mlle. Bernhardt. . . . She is not, to my sense, a celebrity because she is an artist. She is a celebrity because, apparently, she desires, with an intensity that has rarely been

herself tells of the dying words of Charles Varrey: "I am content to die because I shall hear no more of Sarah Bernhardt and the great Français." The latter was de Lesseps, then much in the public eye.

equaled, to be one, and because all ends are alike to her. . . . She has compassed her ends with a completeness which makes of her a sort of fantastically impertinent *victrix* poised upon a perfect pyramid of ruins—the ruins of a hundred British prejudices and proprieties. . . . The trade of a celebrity, pure and simple, had been invented, I think, before she came to London; if it had not been, it is certain that she would have discovered it. She has in a supreme degree what the French call the *génie de la réclame*—the advertising genius; she may, indeed, be called the muse of the newspaper.”

But trouble was brewing, and the irrepressible Sarah was soon making difficulties for her *confrères*. She insisted on her right to give performances before private audiences on the nights she was not appearing with the company. Perrin had flown into a rage when he first heard of these performances, for it was the *Comédie's* chief grievance against her that she *would not rest*. There came a day in London when Sarah sent word she was too tired to appear. A Saturday audience had to be dismissed at the last moment; it was too late to change the bill. A great commotion ensued among the company and in the Paris press. So many and varied were the attacks on her that she was on the point of resignation. She had brought to London a number of her sculptures and paintings and gave an exhibition, selling a few pieces, and entertaining at the gallery reception a



group of aristocrats and celebrities—Gladstone and Leighton among them. She made a trip to Liverpool to buy more lions, and came back with a chetah, a wolf, and a half dozen chameleons to add to her menagerie. The members of the company thought she was ruining the dignity of “Molière’s House”; and all manner of stories were told. “It was said,” she wrote, “that for a shilling anyone might see me dressed as a man; that I smoked huge cigars leaning on the balcony of my house; that at the various receptions when I gave one-act plays, I took my maid with me for the dialogue; that I practiced fencing in my garden, dressed as a *pierrot* in white, and that when taking boxing lessons I had broken two teeth for my unfortunate professor.” These stories were only less dreadful than the tales told in Paris: that she had thrown a live kitten into the fire, and poisoned two monkeys with her own hands!

As a matter of fact, it is probable that Sarah was finding irksome the restrictions of the *Comédie*, was ambitious to earn more money and, as anxious for her exit from the company as were her jealous *confrères*, was only waiting for a chance to sever her contract. But contracts with the *Française* are not lightly broken. As Coquelin had told her: “When one has the good fortune and the honor of belonging to the *Comédie Française* one must remain there until the end of one’s career.” She had to watch her chance shrewdly.

Again returned to Paris, the company of the

*Comédie* revived, on April 17, 1880, Augier's *L'Aventurière*. From whatever cause—pique at being assigned a part she disliked in a play she detested, a temporary suspension of her usual power, or, as she says herself, illness that prevented proper study of her part,—she failed rather miserably. Even the usually indulgent Sarcey said: "Her Clorinde was absolutely colorless"; and the other critics, to a man, wrote scathing reviews. Sarah saw her chance, as she thought, and determined that this would be her last performance at the *Comédie*. The morning after the fiasco she wrote to Perrin:

"*Monsieur l'Administrateur*:

"You made me play before I was ready. You gave me only eight stage rehearsals, and there were only three full rehearsals of the piece. I could not make up my mind to appear under such conditions, but you insisted upon it. What I foresaw has come to pass, and the result of the performance has even gone beyond what I expected. One critic actually charges me with playing Virginie in *L'Assommoir* instead of *L'Aventurière*! May Emile Augier and Zola absolve me! It is my first rebuff at the *Comédie*, and it shall be my last. I warned you at the dress rehearsal. You have gone too far. I now keep my word. When you receive this letter I shall have left Paris. Be good enough, *Monsieur l'Administrateur*, to accept my resignation as from this moment.

Apr. 18, 1880.

SARAH BERNHARDT."

An immense commotion at once arose, as if some tremendous political upheaval had oc-

curred. Sarah took train and disappeared in the country, just as on a similar occasion, years before, she had suddenly gone off to Spain. The press, her fellow players, and the author of the play all poured upon her head a shower of abuse. M. Sarcey prophesied: "She had better not deceive herself. Her success will not be lasting. She is not one of those *artistes* who can bear the whole weight of a piece on their own shoulders, and who require no assistance to hold the public attention."<sup>25</sup> The *Comédie* took legal action against her, and a few months later, when the suit was tried, Sarah was formally deprived of her standing as *sociétaire*, of her portion of the reserve fund, amounting to more than eight thousand dollars, and in addition had to pay the *Française* damages of twenty thousand dollars. She hadn't the money, but she soon earned it, on her first American tour.

So ended, for good and all, Bernhardt's connection with the government theatres; so abruptly did she turn a corner in her remarkable career. From her retirement Sarah announced, absurdly enough, that she would renounce the stage, and live by painting and sculpture, for these, she said, brought her thirty thousand francs (\$6,000) a year. As a matter of fact, within two weeks she signed a

<sup>25</sup> In this statement, for once, M. Sarcey justified Sardou's tribute, inspired, seven years later, by Sarcey's criticism of *La Tosca*: "Sarcey, who knows nothing about painting, music, architecture or sculpture, and to whom Nature has harshly denied all sense of the artistic."

contract with Henry E. Abbey, who post-haste crossed the ocean for the purpose, to go to America. His English agent, Jarrett, had long been importuning her to go. Now she was glad to accept.<sup>26</sup>

Sarah's wanderings now began—those wanderings that have carried her up and down the world, made her name familiar everywhere, brought her riches and (in William Winter's sonorous phrase) "such adulation and advocacy as have seldom been awarded to even the authentic benefactors of human society." First she played a month in London, giving the pieces she was preparing for the American tour, and scoring a tremendous success, artistic, financial and social. A newspaper writer said at this time: "It has been said here that English society is not so eager this season to make her a social goddess as it was last; but it would hardly be possible for a woman to be more thoroughly besieged than is Sarah—that is the name by which people generally fondly call her. To see her is almost as difficult as to see the Queen—I dare say for people not connected with the artistic world even more so. Sarah lives very comfortably—even luxuriously—and entertains lavishly. It seems to me that the only lack of attention that she could possibly complain of is that the Queen has not yet left her card, and that is a complaint she must share with many people."

<sup>26</sup> She was to have \$1,000 per night, half the receipts over \$3,000, \$200 a week for hotel bills, and a special car.



To her amazement the Paris critics followed her to London, and praised her extravagantly. Sarcey personally tried to induce her to return to Paris, and M. Perrin sent Got, the *doyen* of the *Comédie*, on the same errand. Sarah refused; she was enjoying her freedom and her large earnings. She went to Belgium and then to Denmark. At Copenhagen she brought a storm about her ears by a gratuitous affront to the German Ambassador to Denmark, Baron Magnus. At a dinner in her honor he gallantly proposed a health to "*la belle France*." Sarah was at once on her feet, in a theatrical mood, mindful of the smarts that lingered from the war of 1870-1871, and much impressed with her own importance. "I suppose, *Monsieur l'Embassadeur de Prusse*," she cried, "you mean the *whole* of France." This obvious reference to Alsace-Lorraine put the amiable Baron to confusion, broke up the dinner, threw consternation into the French diplomats on duty in Copenhagen, and enraged Bismarck. It is only fair to say that Sarah was genuinely sorry for her impetuous "break."

Before sailing for America, Sarah was prevailed upon to undertake a month's provincial tour in France—something she had never done. She appeared in Nantes, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Lyons and Geneva. Everywhere enthusiasm for her ran high. "Medals bearing her image and superscription, Sarah Bernhardt bracelets and collars, photographs and biographies were sold in the streets. At Lyons the Khedive's

son unsuccessfully offered £80 for a stage-box." <sup>27</sup>

On October 16, 1880, Mlle. Bernhardt sailed for New York. On November 8, at Booth's Theatre, she made her first appearance in America in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, which, with much success, she had added to her repertoire since leaving the *Comédie*.<sup>28</sup> Her triumph was immediate. She had been told that New York would receive her coldly. At the end of the play, however, "there was quite a manifestation and everyone was deeply moved," while after the play a large crowd serenaded and cheered before her hotel. Sarah had been put on her mettle, and, as always, she did her best in the face of possible opposition. And these ovations repeated themselves in each city, both in the United States and in Canada.

The Bishop of Montreal took it upon himself to condemn Bernhardt, her company, her plays, the authors and French literature in general. As if in reply to his utterances, the public flocked to see Sarah. As is usual with such strictures, the Bishop had given the best pos-

<sup>27</sup> Huret.

<sup>28</sup> She played on this tour: *La Dame aux Camélias* (sixty-five times); *Frou-Frou* (forty-one times); *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (seventeen); *Hernani* (fourteen); *Le Sphinx* (seven); *Phèdre* (six); *La Princesse Georges* (three); and *L'Etrangère* (three),—one hundred and fifty-six performances in all, with average receipts of \$2,820. She acted in half a hundred cities of the East, Middle West and South, including New York, Boston, Montreal, Ottawa, Springfield, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Memphis, Louisville, Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

sible advertising<sup>29</sup> and each night Sarah's sleigh was dragged by cheering men.

Wherever she went, her astute managers saw to it that the Bernhardtian advertising tradition was maintained: She went to Menlo Park to call on Thomas A. Edison; at Boston she visited a captive live whale in the harbor, and stood (and fell!) upon its back; in Canada she visited a tribe of Iroquois; at Montreal she ventured on the ice in the St. Lawrence and put her life in peril; visiting the Colt factory at Springfield, Massachusetts, she fired off some newly invented cannon;—"it amused me very much without procuring me any emotion," she wrote; at Chicago she witnessed the slaughtering of pigs at the stock-yards; in St. Louis her jewelry was exhibited in a store window; at Niagara she again endangered her life by getting herself into an awkward place on the ice bridge below the falls.

Her object was accomplished, at all events. She had won in America a new fame and a much needed fortune. She had earned more than one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. She was now able to pay her debt to the *Française*, and had a comfortable sum left. And her return to France was a veritable return from Elba. Her vessel was met by scores of small boats, gay with welcoming flags, and the wharves held

<sup>29</sup> In Chicago another bishop attacked Bernhardt and her plays. Mr. Abbey, her manager, thereupon sent him this letter: "Whenever I visit your city I am accustomed to spend four hundred dollars in advertising. But as you have done the advertising for me, I send you \$200 for your poor."

thousands of people shouting: "*Vive Sarah Bernhardt!*" Her first performance in France of *La Dame aux Camélias*, at Havre in May, 1881, was "a perfect triumph."

It is startling to reflect that a woman who thus reached the zenith of her career a generation ago is still a working actress. What a triumph for the frail physique and the dauntless will! It is worth while to get a picture of her at about the time of her American tour, when she was thirty-six years old. A correspondent who visited her in London wrote: "I never was more agreeably disappointed in the appearance of a person than when Sarah smilingly and merrily tripped into the room. She looked infinitely fresher, brighter and prettier than I had ever seen her on the stage. Her photographs are perfect caricatures—every one of them. They give no idea of those wonderfully clear, translucent, great blue eyes, with their now soft and melting and now keen and penetrating glance; of her fresh and fair complexion, which on the stage is hidden under a horrid mask of thick paint; of her beautiful light blond hair, which lacks just a shade of being golden and is curled in the most graceful fashion; of her tender and sensitive mouth, the slightest motion of which is full of character and expression. I had never considered her pretty. I now, after a most careful and painstaking inspection, decidedly thought her so. She was charmingly dressed, too, and her thinness of person, which is so generally marked,



but which she ridicules herself, was most artistically disguised. The waves of lace and ruffles which fell about her neck appeared to hide a bust worthy of Diana herself."

Other contemporary accounts show that those who visited her at her studio found her clad in a gray or white flannel suit of masculine garments,—jacket, trousers, necktie and all, "looking something like a thirteen-year-old boy." Though Sarah performed wonders in the way of self-advertising, more than one observer has noticed that she had a certain natural dignity that was not altogether inconsistent with a rather rollicking playfulness. "Her words are those of a lady," wrote one, "and her enunciation, though rapid, beautifully distinct." She has always been eminently hospitable.

In the engaging phrase of one of her biographers,<sup>30</sup> "Marriage was the only eccentricity that Sarah had not yet perpetrated." In the spring of 1882 she remedied this deficiency by marrying a member of her company, a Greek named Damala, or, as he was known on the stage, Daria. Sarah had been proceeding up and down Europe (always patriotically excepting Germany), playing in France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Italy, Austria and Spain, everywhere with immense success.<sup>31</sup> In the midst of this tour, quite un-

<sup>30</sup> Huret.

<sup>31</sup> A dispatch from Moscow represents the feeling there: "Sarah Bernhardt is extremely hoarse and cannot appear this evening. General consternation prevails." She finally did act in Berlin, in 1902.

expectedly (April, 1882), came the announcement of the marriage. In order to have the ceremony performed in London, she had traveled from Naples, and then returned to Spain to resume the tour.<sup>32</sup> It was the talk of the day that the reason for Sarah's sudden marriage and for the selection of London as the scene of the ceremony, was not only her passing infatuation for Damala, but also a wish to propitiate English Puritanism. For a tour of England and Scotland soon followed. The marriage was not a huge success, however. It lasted not more than a year.

The mere statement of Bernhardt's wanderings is sufficiently astonishing and is one proof of her wonderful vitality. In 1886, a tour that lasted more than a year took her to Mexico, Brazil, Chile, the Argentine,<sup>33</sup> the United States and Canada. Two years later she acted in Constantinople, Cairo and Alexandria, besides most of the European countries. In the early part of 1891 she left Europe for two years and played not only in North and South America, but this time as far afield as Australia. Sarah has been a cosmopolitan figure, if there ever was one. As the land of readily won dollars, the United States has naturally been much favored; for beginning in 1880, Bernhardt has

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Bernhardt's son Maurice was born in 1865 and was, therefore, seventeen at the time of his mother's marriage.

<sup>33</sup> The Argentinos, in enthusiastic but ill-advised generosity, presented Sarah with an estate of thirteen thousand acres. As if Sarah could feel at home so far from Paris!

made no less than nine tours in America.<sup>34</sup>

Like a number of actors of the other sex, but almost alone among actresses, Bernhardt has dabbled in the management of theatres. Soon after her first American tour, she assumed control of the *Ambigu* in Paris. If she had acted in her own theatre (as later she did), her business venture might have succeeded. As it was, she was acting *Fédora* at the *Vaudeville*, and later, with only moderate success, in Holland

<sup>34</sup> Mme. Bernhardt's more important productions, since she became a manager in her own right, have been as follows: *Fédora*, 1882; *Nana Sahib*, 1883; *Macbeth*, *Théodora*, 1884; *Marion Delorme*, 1885; *Hamlet* (Ophelia), *Le Maître des Forges*, 1886; *La Tosca*, 1887; *Francillon*, 1888; *Lena*, 1889; *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Cléopâtre*, 1890; *Pauline Blanchard*, *La Dame de Chaland*, 1891; *Les Rois*, 1893; *Izeïl*, *Gismonda*, 1894; *Magda*, *La Princesse Loïtaine*, 1895; *Lorenzaccio*, 1896; *Spiritisme*, *La Samaritaine*, *Les Mauvais Bergers*, 1897; *La Ville Morte*, *Lysiane*, *Médée*, 1898; *Hamlet*, 1899; *L'Aiglon*, 1900; *Francesca da Rimini*, 1902; *Andromache*, 1903; *La Sorcière*, 1904; *Tisbe*, *Angelo*, 1905; *La Vierge d'Avila*, 1906; *Les Bouffons*, 1907; *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, *La Courtisane de Corinthe*, 1908; *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1909; *La Femme X*, *Judas*, *Le Cœur d'Homme* (written by herself), *La Beffa*, 1910; *La Reine Elisabeth*, *Une Nuit de Noël*, 1912; *Jeanne Doré*, 1913.

To the plays she had acted during the first American tour, 1880-81, (see page 28, note) she added, on her subsequent visits: 1887, *Fédora*, *Le Maître des Forges*, *Théodora*; 1891, *La Tosca*, *Cléopâtre*; 1891-92, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *La Dame de Chaland*, *Pauline Blanchard Leah*; 1896, *Izeïl*, *Magda*, *Gismonda*, *La Femme de Claude*; 1900-01, (with Coquelin) *L'Aiglon*, *Hamlet*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*; 1905-06, *La Sorcière*, *Angelo*, *Sapho*, *Tisbé*. (During the tour of 1905-06, while acting in Texas she was forced on two or three occasions to appear in a circus tent in lieu of a theatre. The "theatrical trust" had for some reason denied her the privilege of acting in its theatres.) In 1910-11 she appeared, for the first time in America, in *La Femme X*, *La Samaritaine*, *Jean-Marie*, *Sœur Beatrice*, and *Judas*.

and Belgium. The *Ambigu* languished. In the meantime, Sarah had spent all her money. Finding herself in straits, she auctioned her jewels, and realized handsomely on them. It was an event in Paris, and the sale produced no less than thirty-five thousand dollars.

Her next venture in management was more successful. In 1883, on behalf of her son, she bought a partnership in the *Porte St. Martin*, and produced *Frou-Frou* there for the first time in Paris. Her régime at this house was interrupted by the long tour begun in 1886, but continued, under the prosperity shed by her own presence, until 1893, when she bought the *Renaissance*. Since that day she has owned her own theatre, until 1899 at the *Renaissance*, and since then at the more commodious *Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt*, her renaming of the *Théâtre des Nations*.

When Bernhardt went to America for the first time she had in her company an actress named Marie Colombier. For reasons that are difficult to determine, this woman conceived a passionate hatred of Sarah and on her return to France prepared, or had prepared for her,<sup>35</sup> a thinly disguised pseudo-biography of Bernhardt which sold in enormous numbers under the name *Les Memoires de Sarah Barnum*. This pamphlet subjected Bernhardt to miscel-

<sup>35</sup> It was really written, gossip said, by M. Paul Bonnetain. Sarah replied with an equally abusive book about Mlle. Colombier, which was entitled *La Vie de Marie Pigeonnier*, and which was probably written by M. Richepin.



laneous ridicule and abuse. Although on the whole false, parts of it may have been true enough to penetrate the armor against gossip that Sarah schooled herself to wear. At any rate, she was furiously angry. When the book had been in circulation long enough to give her action its proper background and advertising value, Bernhardt one day turned up at Mme. Colombier's apartment, accompanied by her son and M. Jean Richepin, and armed with a horse-whip. The party forced themselves in, and Sarah, great actress, proceeded to chase her detractor about the place, beating her soundly with the whip. A similar incident occurred at Rio de Janeiro in 1886. Mme. Noirmont, a member of the company, one day "went for" Sarah with strong language and the flat of her hand. Sarah was at first content with the woman's arrest, but one evening, between the acts, her desire for revenge got the better of her, and Mme. Noirmont was, in her turn, thoroughly horsewhipped. The cause of these (at the time) world famous ructions, which are now important only—if at all—as shedding light on Sarah's frail humanity, has always remained shrouded in mystery.

Further proof that the "divine Sarah" was after all very human was furnished in 1907 when she published a volume of reminiscences.<sup>36</sup> William Winter's estimate of this book is char-

<sup>36</sup> It carries her story down to her return from the first American tour, in 1881. A second volume was vaguely promised.

acteristic; it contains, he says: "some passages of interest, but, as a whole, it is diffuse, flamboyant, and artificial,—an eccentric contribution to theatrical annals, mottled over by affectation, egregious vanity, and the pervasive insincerity of an inveterate self-exploiter." It would be juster to say that the book shows in many places a more likable woman than the eccentric celebrity was supposed to be, and that it contains but few passages that are *not* of interest. At any rate, it shows Sarah to be, after all, in many respects like us commonplace people.

Whatever hostility she may have met in her earlier days, Bernhardt long ago won the unqualified homage of her countrymen. To them she became a cherished national institution, the great actress of her time. "The great and only Sarah" is the phrase of the once scoffing Sarcey. "I am not quite sure," wrote Lemaître in 1894, "whether Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt can say 'How do you do?' like any ordinary mortal. To be herself she must be extraordinary, and then she is incomparable." "You cannot praise her for reciting poetry well," said M. Theodore de Banville, a poet learned in metres and rhythms; "she is the muse of poetry itself. A secret instinct moves her. She recites poetry as the nightingale sings, as the wind sighs, and as the water murmurs."

"Her acting is the summit of art,"—again Sarcey—"our grandfathers used to speak with emotion of Talma and Mlle. Mars. I never saw

either the one or the other, and I have barely any recollection of Rachel, but I do not believe that anything more original and more perfect than Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's *Phèdre* has ever been seen in any theatre."

To take this view of Sarah one must, perhaps, be a Frenchman. The Sarcey of America, William Winter, certainly could not take it. With what may be termed the utilitarian Puritanism that seeks in the theatre to be "benefited, cheered, encouraged, ennobled, instructed, or even rationally entertained," he could see in Bernhardt's art only an exhibition of morbid eccentricity. Mr. Winter, here as elsewhere, has been made intolerant of much in the institution he has served and honored by his insistence on "intrinsic grandeur" in its characters. He is always looking for "the woman essentially good and noble," whereas the modern drama has as one of its most cherished prerogatives its right to portray mixed characters,—often women whose "essential goodness" is mingled with much human frailty.

Fairly enough, however, according to his lights, does Mr. Winter specify and define Bernhardt's peculiar merits: "They are, in brief, the ability to elicit complete and decisive dramatic effect from situations of horror, terror, vehement passion, and mental anguish; neatness in the adjustment of manifold details; evenly sustained continuity; ability to show a woman who seeks to cause physical infatuation and who generally can succeed in doing so; a

woman in whom vanity, cruelty, selfishness, and animal propensity are supreme; a woman of formidable, sometimes dangerous, sometimes terrible mental force."

Not all of Madame Bernhardt's impersonations, however, fall within Mr. Winter's proscribed class. She has at times shown a startling propensity for breaking into new and strange fields. Her *Jeanne d'Arc* (1890), a genuine success, was certainly not a "morbid eccentric." "It is impossible to make *Hamlet* Parisian," but, in 1899, Sarah played *Hamlet*, to the satisfaction of the French at least. "She never did anything finer," said Rostand. "She makes one understand *Hamlet*, and understand him beyond the possibility of a doubt."<sup>37</sup> A year later she was playing Reichstadt, the son of Napoleon, in *L'Aiglon*, an impersonation that even Mr. Winter admitted "was one of beautiful symmetry." And of recent years Sarah has threatened—though as yet she has not accomplished—the acting of Mephistopheles in *Faust*.

When Bernhardt was in London in 1895, George Bernard Shaw was in the midst of his career as the dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, serving a three-year term of what he called his slavery to the theatre. He observed Sarah with none too sympathetic eyes, but what

<sup>37</sup> But to Mr. Winter her *Hamlet* was a "dreadful desecration"! When she produced the play in Paris, the late M. Catulle Mendes and another journalist fought a duel, having disputed as to whether *Hamlet* was fat or not.



he said shows, under his purposefully irritating exterior, the shrewd critical insight that makes the "Dramatic Opinions and Essays" one of the soundest books of theatrical comment, as well as one of the most readable:

"Madame Bernhardt has the charm of a jolly maturity, rather spoilt and petulant, perhaps, but always ready with a sunshine-through-the-clouds smile if only she is made much of. Her dresses and diamonds, if not exactly splendid, are at least splendacious; her figure, far too scantily upholstered in the old days, is at its best; and her complexion shows that she has not studied modern art in vain. . . . She is beautiful with the beauty of her school, and entirely inhuman and incredible. But the incredibility is pardonable, because, though it is all the greatest nonsense, nobody believing in it, the actress herself least of all, it is so artful, so clever, so well recognized a part of the business, and carried off with such a genial air, that it is impossible not to accept it with good-humor. One feels, when the heroine bursts on the scene, a dazzling vision of beauty, that instead of imposing on you, she adds to her own piquancy by looking you straight in the face, and saying, in effect: 'Now who would ever suppose that I am a grandmother?' That, of course, is irresistible; and one is not sorry to have been coaxed to relax one's notions of the dignity of art when she gets to serious business and shows how ably she does her work. The coaxing suits well with the childishly egotistical character of

her acting, which is not the art of making you think more highly or feel more deeply, but the art of making you admire her, pity her, champion her, weep with her, laugh at her jokes, follow her fortunes breathlessly, and applaud her wildly when the curtain falls. It is the art of finding out all your weaknesses and practicing on them—cajoling you, harrowing you, exciting you—on the whole, fooling you. And it is always Sarah Bernhardt in her own capacity who does this to you. The dress, the title of the play, the order of the words may vary; but the woman is always the same. She does not enter into the leading character: she substitutes herself for it.”

Where a more tolerant judgment would proclaim Sarah’s inalterable romanticism, Mr. Shaw, whose passion for truth and realism leave him little room for the sort of truth and reality there may be in the romantic, sees only the tricks of her trade: “Every year Madame Bernhardt comes to us with a new play, in which she kills somebody with any weapon from a hairpin to a hatchet; intones a great deal of dialogue as a sample of what is called ‘the golden voice,’ to the great delight of our curates, who all produce more or less golden voices by exactly the same trick; goes through her well-known feat of tearing a passion to tatters at the end of the second or fourth act, according to the length of the piece; serves out a ration of the celebrated smile; and between whiles gets through any ordinary acting that may be necessary in a thor-

oughly businesslike and competent fashion. This routine constitutes a permanent exhibition, which is refurnished every year with fresh scenery, fresh dialogue, and a fresh author, whilst remaining itself invariable. Still, there are real parts in Madame Bernhardt's repertory which date from the days before the traveling show was opened; and she is far too clever a woman, and too well endowed with stage instinct, not to rise, in an off-handed, experimental sort of way, to the more obvious points in such an irresistible new part as Magda." On the whole, Shaw is something less than fair to Sarah. But one cannot deny him an appreciative chortle when he speaks of her "dragging from sea to sea her Armada of transports."

On December 9, 1896, there was held a fête in Paris in honor of Bernhardt—the most striking in a long line of similar occasions. It was felt that her position as queen of the stage deserved a public recognition. It was carried through with Gallic enthusiasm. Sardou presided at a mid-day banquet attended by Coppée, Lemaître, Theuriet, Lavedan, Coquelin, Charpentier, Rostand, and a host of others from the literary and artistic world of Paris. Sardou hailed her as the acknowledged sovereign of dramatic art, and bore testimony not only to her acting, but also to "the benevolence, the charity, and the exquisite kindness of the woman." When Sarah had responded with a few words of thanks, there was a great demonstration, emotionally enthusiastic and Gallic.

Later in the day, at the *Renaissance*, the ceremonies were continued. Sarah gave the third act of *Phèdre* and the fourth act of *Rome Vaincue*. She gave her best efforts and her hearers were much moved. Huret records that all his neighbors in the audience were weeping. Then, five poets, François Coppée, Edmond Haraucourt, Catulle Mendès, André Theuriet and Edmond Rostand, advanced in turn, each to read a sonnet in Sarah's honor. When Rostand's—the last and best—was finished, she was seen to tremble and to stand weeping in their midst. "No spectacle could be finer," says Huret, "than this woman, whose unconquerable energy had withstood the struggles and difficulties of a thirty-years' career, standing overwhelmed and vanquished by the power of a few lines of poetry."

Whether or not she was a divinely ennobled and beneficent artist, this trait of "unconquerable energy" is undeniably a marvel. For instance, in January, 1906, when she was sixty-one, she appeared in Boston. In the twenty-six hours between half-past eight on Friday evening and half-past ten on Saturday evening she acted *Fédora*, *Phèdre*, and *Cesarine* in Dumas's *La Femme de Claude*, each a long, exacting and, one would think, exhausting rôle. At the end of the third play, however, Bernhardt had her artistic resources and her strength as fully under her command as at the beginning. And she had been forty-four years on the stage. This was but an incident of a



widely extended tour, a sample of what she had been doing all her life.

In February, 1907, she was made a professor at the *Conservatoire*, partly in an attempt to make her eligible for the cross of the Legion of Honor. This was an honor that Sarah had long desired, and, it must be said, deserved. Her service to her country as a herald of its language and art—to say nothing of that during 1870—has been inestimably greater than that of many who have received the honor. But in France an actress is still without social position, and the social conservatism of Paris officialdom always prevailed in the face of Sarah's champions. For no actress, merely as an actress, had ever been admitted to the Legion. In January, 1914, however, it was announced throughout the world that Mme. Bernhardt had received the long-coveted decoration. The usual objections and traditions had been interposed, but President Poincaré himself cut the red tape. In March the formal presentation occurred. *L'Université des Annales* organized the ceremony. Government officials, actors and actresses, poets, playwrights and a throng of the notabilities of Paris gathered to do Madame Sarah honor. The Minister of Fine Arts, on behalf of the Government, presented the decoration and made a formal speech in which he summed up her services as patriot and as a missionary of the French language. Verses by Rostand and other poets were read, music composed for the occasion was played, artists advanced and

heaped flowers at Bernhardt's feet, and then came forward twelve actors and actresses, each representing a famous character in Bernhardt's repertoire, and speaking lines from the original plays. The whole became a sonnet in dialogue. Finally Bernhardt herself ended the very French but very sincere occasion by an eloquent and tender speech of thanks.

About this time a photograph found its way into the American newspapers. It showed Madame Sarah with the glittering cross of the Legion pinned to her dress. Seated on her lap and gazing at the decoration is Madame Sarah's *great-grandchild*.

We have mentioned Mr. Winter's wholesale repudiation of the plays in which Bernhardt attained her eminence. Without subscribing to the total depravity of such plays and of Bernhardt's influence, one can freely admit that her appeal fell below the supremest heights of drama, and that her field was, after all, a narrow one. There were natural causes for this narrowness. It was imposed by her personality. She partakes to the fullest extent of that variation of the French character that is predominatingly sensual, yet regards its sensuality as a kind of spirituality. Again, her technical equipment as an actress included a voice of such richness and variety of effect, and a power of gesture and pose so naturally adapted to the grand style, that her tendency was for the florid and rhetorical. Thus the idealistic or poetic play, on the one hand, and the frankly

naturalistic on the other, were beyond her province. The result has been, most notably, a succession of plays by Sardou—*Fédora*, *Théodora*, *La Tosca*, *Cléopâtre*, *Gismonda*, *Zoraya*, in which the author "accepting her limitations, harped time and time again upon the same notes. His heroines are creatures all alike compounded of Bernhardtian attributes—feline in their endearments, tigerish in their passions of love and hate. As stage figures they represent the boldest prose of the emotions, expressed with a rhetoric that is flawless, but still rhetoric."<sup>38</sup>

So much for the main note. In a career so astonishingly long and successful there have been, of course, others. We have seen how, in

<sup>38</sup> John Corbin in the *New York Sun*, Dec. 17, 1905. A quarter of a century earlier, Matthew Arnold had written of Bernhardt, then in the midst of her first visit to London: "One remark I will make, a remark suggested by the inevitable comparison of Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt with Rachel. One talks vaguely of genius, but I had never till now comprehended how much of Rachel's superiority was purely in intellectual power, how eminently this power counts in the actor's art as in all art, how just is the instinct which led the Greeks to mark with a high and severe stamp the Muses. Temperament and quick intelligence, passion, nervous mobility, grace, smile, voice, charm, poetry—Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt has them all; one watches her with pleasure, with admiration, and yet not without a secret disquietude. Something is wanting, or, at least, not present in sufficient force; something which alone can secure and fix her administration of all the charming gifts which she has, can alone keep them fresh, keep them sincere, save them from perils by caprice, perils by mannerism; that something is high intellectual power. It was here that Rachel was so great; she began, one says to oneself, as one recalls her image and dwells upon it—she began almost where Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt ends."

*L'Aiglon*, *Hamlet*, and *Jeanne d'Arc* she boldly went outside her usual field. Even within it there have been of course many moments of winning appeal or great power. To none other than Mr. Winter did her Frou-Frou appear pure-spirited, "an exquisite texture . . . of child-like womanhood,"<sup>39</sup> and as Floria Tosca "Bernhardt's acting . . . was magnificent,—for it created the effect of perfect illusion"; it will "be remembered with a shuddering sense of horror as long as anything is remembered of her achievement. . . . Of its kind it was absolutely perfect art." In *La Femme X* he found her art consummate. Her Marguerite Gauthier in *La Dame aux Camélias* did much to give that heroine genuine and compelling appeal to the purer emotions, her Phèdre has its moments of genuine nobility. And though it may be true that, in the main, she worked in those strata of the drama that are of "little benefit to humanity," the sheer extent and strength of her influence bear witness that much in her work found a response in the minds and sympathies of two generations of people.

She is, after all, unique, whatever the loftiness of her message; for the intensity of her

<sup>39</sup> "Her fiery, voluble utterance of jealous rage when at last she seemed to lose all control of herself (without ever losing it) . . . was as splendid, whether viewed as expression of human nature or illustration of proficiency in acting, as any professional exploit of hers in the whole of her long career. . . . It was in her showing of the sweetly capricious quality of the character, however, that the actress was supremely fine." *The Wallet of Time*, Vol. I.



power, the span of time over which she has exercised it and the universality of her fame combine to write a chapter that stands alone in theatrical annals.

To the body of Bernhardtian legend has now been added the legend of the leg. This time it is an authentic legend, and one that adds greatly to Sarah's merited fame for courage and will.

In February, 1915, she wrote to Mme. Jane Catulle Mendès:

*"My Dear:* As you perhaps have learned, they are going to cut off my leg Monday. They should have done so last Sunday, but it seems I was not sufficiently prepared for that first performance. The principal artist, my right leg, had not learned its rôle. It has now learned it, and it will be charming."

There is a long story of patiently endured suffering back of that lightly phrased note. In 1912 she made a visit to America, playing—as before and since in London—in the vaudeville theatres short scenes from her former successes. There were circumstances in her acting that puzzled the beholders. She would take a fixed position and maintain it for long periods. When she moved across the stage, it was usually with another's support. Such hamperings to her acting were commonly put down to her advanced age, or sometimes to rheumatism. As a matter of fact, Sarah had for ten years

suffered from osteoarthritis—chronic inflammation of the articulation of her right knee. The trouble manifested itself first at Montevideo, and was there temporarily and inadequately treated. From that time, at first intermittently and then continuously, the knee brought her pain that she endured with fortitude and without curtailment of her work. As time went on, she gradually modified the business of her parts, and even had plays written to suit her limitations,—as in *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, in which she stood in court all during one act and in another remained seated at the side of her bed.

In the Spring of 1914, while she was playing in Liège, she gave the afflicted knee a slight sprain. Upon this, the trouble became acute. She remained, first at her house on Belle Isle, and later at Andernos, now Arcachon, with the knee in a fixed plaster cast. The pain was reduced; Mme. Sarah could paint and could work on her memoirs, and her general health was excellent; but here she was with her career cut off! When the surgeons, hoping to replace the cast with some apparatus that would permit her to walk, found that instead the knee would have to be kept unmoved for an indefinite time, Sarah took matters into her own hands, and ordered the offending member removed. It was better, she said, in a letter to Maurice Barres, "to be mutilated than to remain impotent."

On February 22, 1915, at Bordeaux, in her seventy-first year, Mme. Bernhardt's right leg

was amputated above the knee. "While the hospital attendants were preparing for the operation," said a dispatch from her bedside, "the actress conversed volubly with her doctors: 'Work is my life. So soon as I can be fitted with an artificial leg, I shall resume the stage and all my good spirits shall be restored. I hope again to be able to use all that force of art which now upholds me and which will sustain me until beyond the grave,'"—a speech, as Philip Hale said, "worthy of one of Plutarch's men." Surgeons and nurses present at the operation were deeply impressed by the calm courage with which she faced the operation.<sup>40</sup>

Even in the midst of the horrors and anxieties of universal war, Bernhardt's ordeal challenged world-wide sympathy. Portraits and eulogies appeared in every paper. For a week or more, until it became certain that the operation had been successful, bulletins on her condition were printed daily. Queen Victoria of Spain, the aged Eugénie, M. Deschanel, president of the Chamber of Deputies, Edmond Rostand—these were only a few of those, both proud and humble, whose messages poured in upon her from all quarters. Alexandra, Queen-mother of Great Britain, sent word of the "sympathy which all England shares for the greatest artist in the world." After the opera-

<sup>40</sup> When the American *comédienne*, Elsie Janis, omitted from her London program her imitation of Bernhardt, Sarah heard of it and cabled to Miss Janis: "I am very well. Continue to charm the public with imitations of me."

tion, Mme. Bernhardt said that she was to "live again. Already I am free from suffering, happy and full of courage, and now I am going to get well quickly. I shall retake my place in the world."

This announcement was sufficiently astounding. The remarkable woman then followed it with another,—that she would make a new tour in America, this time not in the vaudeville theatres (where interest in her was before not overwhelming), but in the regular theatres, where she would offer a number of plays in which she has not yet been seen on this side of the Atlantic.

Thus does Bernhardt remain vividly alive to the last. M. Jules Lemaître once said that he admired her because of the unknown he felt to be in her. "She might go into a nunnery, discover the North Pole, be inoculated with rabies, assassinate an emperor, or marry a negro king, and I should never be surprised at anything she did. She is more alive and more incomprehensible by herself than a thousand other human beings."

Thus it may be that she will again rally about her on the stage of Paris the loyal affection that went out to her in the hospital. It is an open secret that for half a dozen years the allegiance of her Paris public has not always been unflagging. She is indubitably old, and her affliction was imperfectly understood. And yet, when her latest play, *Jeanne Doré*, by Tristan Bernard, was produced in December, 1913, a



flash of the old enthusiasm broke out again and one correspondent described the occasion as "easily the most brilliant first night of the Paris season so far." The part, moreover, was an exacting emotional one. In it Madame Sarah seems again to have shown her great power.

## HELENA MODJESKA

THE acting of Madame Modjeska is still remembered vividly by American and English theatregoers, yet its beginnings lie as far away in time as the sixties and as distant in place as Poland. She was born on October 12, 1840, in Cracow, the old Polish capital, now the second city of Galitzia, or Austrian Poland. Twenty-five years before, by the agreement of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, it had been proclaimed a free city. In the year when Modjeska was six, however, Austria, greedy then as now, broke her pledge and annexed the city. The Poles were always a passionately patriotic people, and did not submit calmly. Discontent grew to open revolt, but the hopes of the Cracovians were crushed by the bombardment of the city by the Austrians in 1848.

Thus the little Helcia<sup>1</sup> was born in tragic times, and as a little girl saw scenes of terror and bloodshed. Her mother's house was struck by the cannon shot, and she saw men and children killed before her very door. The horrors of those days were vividly impressed upon her memory and were perhaps not without their effect upon the nature of the future actress.

Her father, Michael Opid, born in the Car-

<sup>1</sup> The Polish diminutive of Helena.



HELENA MODJESKA





pathian mountains, and a teacher in the high school in Cracow, was a simple-hearted, lovable man, something of a scholar and a great lover of music. He was extremely fond of children. His own girls and boys and those of his neighbors would gather about him in the evening, listening to the folk lore of the mountaineers, Polish legends, and tales from the Iliad. When Helcia, years later, herself studied Homer, those winter evenings and their stories were vividly recalled. But Michael Opid's chief delight was music. He played several instruments, the flute especially well. His melodies appealed almost too strongly to the sensitive little Helcia, who during plaintive passages in the music would burst into wails and cries. Singers and musicians were frequent visitors at the Opid house, and in its atmosphere there was thus an artistic element, which undoubtedly had some influence in determining the career of Helcia. Her father died when she was seven, of consumption, induced by exposure while seeking his drowned brother's body. When he knew he was dangerously ill, he returned to his native mountains to die.

It had been the second marriage of Madame Opid. She had been Madame Benda, and having altogether ten children to care for, she could give by no means exclusive attention to any one of them, even had she known that that one was to be a great actress. The children were well cared for so far as their bodily wants

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were concerned, but their personalities were left to themselves to develop. For Helcia this was not altogether unfortunate, for her imagination, stirred by history-making events and by the songs and poems of which she was so fond, had free rein. She did not care much for the society of other children, and was not popular with them. She was a little dreamer, almost painfully bashful, living much in a world of her imagination, and fond of going to church. She would steal away alone to the Dominican chapel, where she would lie face down on the floor, in the manner of the peasant women, arms outstretched, kissing the floor and praying for a miracle or a glimpse of an angel or a saint.

Her first schooling was in the house of a friend of her mother's, a woman with two well-educated daughters who taught the little Helcia, by the time she was seven, to read with ease. She fed her imagination with all the books she could find at hand. In school she liked her Polish history, her French and her grammar.

When Helcia was seven, she was taken to the theatre for the first time. The play was *The Daughter of the Regiment*, and was followed by a ballet *The Siren of Dniestr*, in which little Josephine Hofmann (to be Josef Hofmann's aunt) dressed as a butterfly, hovered about in the air. Helcia was entranced; to her it was all a dream of joy come true.<sup>2</sup> She went to bed

<sup>2</sup> "She went into the kitchen when she got home, in order to make the experiment herself. She built a great pile of all the

that night with a high fever, and for weeks afterward she practiced the butterfly dance, watching her shadow on the wall, much to the amusement of her small brothers. But theatricals became the family pastime. Helcia's three older brothers were enthusiastic. They rigged up a stage at home, with the help of some other boys formed a little company, and every month gave performances for admiring friends. They excluded the girls, and played all the women's parts themselves. The home theatre was probably of great influence in the lives of its members, for two of the boys, besides Helcia and her sister, subsequently went on the stage.

In 1850, when Helcia was in her tenth year, Cracow was burned. The conflagration lasted ten days, and a large part of the city was destroyed. Madame Opid up to this time had been a woman of some property. Her first husband had left her a small estate which she had managed skillfully. Her two houses were now destroyed, her insurance had lapsed ten days before, and she was practically ruined. Here was more misfortune to impress the growing Helcia, to make her, for her years, unusually sensitive and thoughtful. After a few days of almost vagabondage, the family was given temporary quarters in a friend's house. There Helcia, left much to herself, spent her time

saucepans and frying-pans, and then, climbing to the top, tried to stand there upon one toe. Naturally this venture ended in disaster; and Madame Opid vowed Helcia should go no more to the theatre, for it excited her too much. Nor did she again enter a theatre until she was fourteen."—Collins, *Modjeska*.

reading her *Life of St. Genevieve*, a treasured volume which she rescued in the moment of peril. At length installed in a newly hired house, Madame Opid sent Helcia and her little sister Josephine as day pupils to St. John's convent, and supplemented the teachings of the sisters with lessons at home in music and dancing.

It was at this time, when Helena was ten, that she first met Gustave Modrzejewski,<sup>3</sup> who was later to be her husband. He was twenty years her senior. He was a friend of the family and taught the children German, the hated language of the oppressor.

When Helena was twelve, her half-brothers Joseph and Felix Benda had gone away to be actors on the professional stage. To relieve the quiet at home she and her brother Adolphe Opid, who was then fifteen, wrote a play, a one-act tragedy. The scene was laid in Greece, and the acting required the death of Adolphe, and an impassioned scene of grief by Helena when with a sob she threw herself over her dead lover's body. She drew from the sympathetic servants and her great-aunt Theresa genuine tears, but her practical mother was unmoved, thought Helena over-excited and forbade further theatricals.

At fourteen Helena finished the highest grade at the convent. This was the end of her formal schooling, but she at once began a strenu-

<sup>3</sup> The masculine form. The feminine ends in -ska. Madame Modrzejewska later simplified the name to Modjeska.



ous and varied course of reading. She began with the Polish poets, of whom there are several proudly cherished by their countrymen. It was the family's pleasant custom, fostered by the well-read Mr. Modrzejewski, to read aloud in the winter evenings. In this way Helena learned of Scott, Dickens, Dumas, George Sand, and many another. She had neglected her German, and it was to stimulate an interest in the disliked language that Mr. Modrzejewski proposed that she be taken to see a German play. She was immensely excited, for it was seven years since she had been to the theatre. The play was Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*. She entered the theatre in a state of awe, she sat through the performance in spellbound fascination, and the next morning with the help of a dictionary began reading Schiller in German. Schiller became for the time an overwhelming enthusiasm with her. She imagined herself in love with him, and placed before her in her room his statuette, as a kind of idol. Such extravagances as this, and the religious period that preceded it, would have indicated to a discerning eye a promisingly responsive and emotional nature. To those about her, however, even to her mother, she was only a moody and at times excitable child whose enthusiasm was to be repressed and whose future was doubtful. She helped with the family work, as all did in this time of stress, but she was living apart in a world of poetry, of vague and ardent dreams.

She was now taken to the theatre occasionally. Felix Benda had become one of the popular actors of the local theatre. One day, when Helena was about sixteen, he overheard her reciting to her sister. Surprised and pleased, he took her next day to the house of one of the leading actresses of the company, who as an artist of experience could judge of the young girl's chances of success on the stage. All this came very suddenly. Helena had not seriously thought of a stage career. The hearing was a trying ordeal, for she was terribly frightened. After giving Helena a lesson or two, the actress was discouraging. She advised Madame Opid to keep the young girl at home rather than allow her to become a mediocre actress. For a while Helcia's budding ambitions were crushed.

Madame Opid, for one, was not disappointed. The family was not so well off as it was before the fire and to Helcia fell a large share of the housework. But she studied and read and thought, with unsettled mind and changing purpose. At one time she thought she would try to achieve fame as a writer; again, at her mother's wish, she studied furiously with a teacher's examination in mind; again, to become a nun seemed the only thing worth while. But shortly there came a rude shock to all these plans. Fritz Devrient, a German actor of great talent, played *Hamlet* in Cracow, and Helena was taken to see him. She had heard of Shakespeare, but had never seen or read any

of his plays. The effect on her was overwhelming. Shakespeare became her master then and there, and she never deserted him. She spent a sleepless night, and the longing to be an actress returned with redoubled strength. She greedily read the plays of Shakespeare in Polish translations, and his bust speedily replaced that of Schiller. The family friend, Gustave Modrzejewski, to her great delight seconded her in her renewed ambition, recommended that she study for the German stage as offering a wider field than the Polish, and arranged for lessons from an excellent actor, Herr Axtman. Indeed, his interest extended further, for when Helcia was seventeen he urged that their marriage, which had come to be an understood thing, take place at once. She had seen much of him; they had read together Goethe and Lessing and the northern sagas; he was her guardian and the kindly counselor of the family; and she looked on him, a man more than twice her age, with real affection; and so they were married at once.

After Helena had taken the name which she was to make so famous, there followed a few quiet years during which her ambitions lay in abeyance. When she was twenty her son Rudolphe was born. The little family, and Madame Opid as well, moved to Bochnia, a little town in Austrian Poland. Here it was that, owing to the circumstance that Bochnia possessed salt mines, Mme. Modjeska had her first opportunity to appear on a real stage. Some

of the miners had been killed in an accident. It occurred to the Modjeskis to give, for the benefit of the bereaved families, some amateur theatricals. They met a friend, a dancing master named Loboiko, who obtained a hall, hastily built some scenery and acted as leading man of the company. There were but three others—a young man who was the dancing master's pupil, Helena as leading lady, and Josephine, her younger sister. Stasia, their nine-year-old niece, was prompter. The plays were two pieces now forgotten—*The White Camelia*, in one act, in which Helena was a countess, and *The Prima-Donna*, in which she was an Italian peasant girl who became an actress. Delighted as she was to realize her cherished ambition to appear on the stage before an actual audience, when the bell rang for the rise of the curtain she was thoroughly frightened. Before she went on she could not think of her lines, and she fairly shook with nervousness. Yet once on the stage her words came to her and she found herself, much to her surprise, quite at her ease. The dignitaries and the country gentlemen of the district and the townspeople all turned out for the performance, and for the two others that followed it, in unexpectedly large numbers. Madame Modjeska's acting, at this her first opportunity for showing it, attracted attention. An actor and stage manager from Warsaw, who happened to be in Bochnia and saw her act, asked her how long she had been on the stage,—an amusing and pleasing ques-



tion,—and urged her to turn her eyes toward Warsaw. Such men do not pay empty compliments, and Helena's confidence now took new hold. The prospect of going to Warsaw drove from her mind any idea of becoming a German actress. It was Warsaw and the Imperial Theatre, or die!

Such was the modest beginning of a career. Mr. Modjeski, so far from objecting to his young wife's being an actress, saw in the new turn of affairs a chance to retrieve the family fortunes and to get a living for them all. A license for a traveling company was obtained from Cracow, Mr. Modjeski constituted himself manager, and the little band of players, traveling in a peasant's wagon, went on to New Sandec.<sup>4</sup> Here the company was gradually enlarged until it had nineteen members, and here they stayed all summer. Helena was from the beginning their star. She and her comrades were but strolling players, living in poorly furnished quarters and eating frugal meals. She had but two dresses, one black for tragedy, the other white for comedy. Yet she was happy as never before or perhaps since. Long afterward she thrilled with the recollection of the enthusiasm and joy of those early days. To live in her own world of youth and eager be-

<sup>4</sup> "The picture of this first professional trip stands vividly before my eyes. The weather was glorious! . . . We were young, full of spirit and hope, and the country enchanting. The joy was so great that I sang. We made plans for future work, we rode in the clouds, building Spanish castles."—*Memories and Impressions of Helena Modjeska*.

ginnings and at the same time in the imaginary world of her heroines, was a happiness that outweighed all lack of comforts.

For more than a year the company traveled about in Austrian Poland. It was during this period that the Polish insurrection of 1863 was brewing. The oppression under which Russian Poland suffered found sympathy in Galitzia and indeed the entire Polish people was in mourning. Every one, at least in the towns, wore black, for the wearing of colors was practically forbidden by public feeling. Yet people contrived to go to the theatre, and "The New Sandec Combination," as it was called, prospered. Their Polish historical pieces roused the patriotism of their audiences and did their share in maintaining the spirit of the people in the face of the Russian outrages.

Madame Modjeska was the favorite of the provincial public to which her company addressed itself. The popular demand for her was such that the audiences fell off when she was not in the cast, and she consequently was forced to appear constantly. When her daughter was born<sup>5</sup> she had finished acting her part in a five act tragedy only two hours before; and in ten days she was again appearing. The company grew in size and improved in quality, and their repertoire was enlarged to include such plays as Schiller's *Die Räuber* and Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*.

This year and a half of "barnstorming" was

<sup>5</sup> Marylka; she lived but two years.

invaluable experience for Modjeska. It gave her confidence and technique, and, finally, recognition. One of the managers of the endowed theatre of Lemberg<sup>6</sup> had seen and liked her acting. In the autumn of 1862 the Modjeskis retired from the strolling company, and after a few probationary performances Helena, then twenty-two, was enrolled a member of the resident company at Lemberg. With her first opportunity to play on a well-equipped stage, with good actors, and before a city audience, she felt that she had made a distinct step upward. She played a wide variety of characters, ranging from great ladies to pages, *ingénues*, and the soubrette parts in operetta. She profited by the example and the friendly advice of Madame Ashberger, who was the leading lady, but the younger women of the company were jealous of the upstart newcomer with the pretty face. They influenced the management to give Modjeska only small parts, and this, with the insufficiency of the salary, so discouraged her that after a year at Lemberg she and her husband returned to try their fortunes again in the provinces.

Mr. Modjeski established in the town of Czernowce a stock company that was largely a family affair. Joseph and Felix Benda, Helena's half-brothers, her sister's husband and Josephine herself, all were members, while Simon Benda led the orchestra. There were more than twenty actors altogether, some of

<sup>6</sup> The capital of Galitzia.

whom afterwards became famous in Poland. The two years at Czerniowce Modjeska filled with hard work. 1863 marked the crisis in the affairs of unhappy Poland. The Galitzians were only less stirred by the tyranny and bloodshed in Russian Poland than their kinsfolk, the victims. Excitement and patriotic feeling ran high and troops were being raised everywhere; yet throughout this troublous period the theatres prospered. As for Modjeska, with admirable energy and ambition she studied and worked. So far she had not played in tragedy. On a visit to Vienna, a brief vacation she took to see a bit of the world with Mr. Modjeski, a manager before whom she tried her powers in a scene from *Marie Stuart* advised her to cultivate her voice and her German before essaying the more serious rôles. Accordingly she practiced faithfully in the midst of a busy career at the theatre. She had attained a considerable reputation in Galitzia, and, as before, appeared constantly, not only in the company's home town but in towns about the province. She was happy in her work, but her health was suffering, and for a while consumption threatened her. Other troubles soon came. In 1865 her two year old daughter died, and soon afterwards other misfortunes, of a domestic nature, ended in her separation from her husband, whom she never saw again.

Moving now to her birthplace, Cracow, with her mother, her little son and her brother Felix, she was soon a member of the company at the



old theatre where she had been taken, years before, to see the plays that had so greatly excited her.

Modjeska began her three years at Cracow when she was almost twenty-five. She had attained genuine popularity in her own province and her reputation was beginning, among those particularly interested in the drama, to extend to other parts of Poland. As the able stage director at Cracow, Mr. Jasinski, told her, she had been petted by the public and spoiled by the critics.<sup>7</sup> The Cracow theatre was beginning a new era just at this time and with the importation into its management of a group of enthusiastic and artistically well-equipped men it set for itself a standard equal to that of the national theatre at Warsaw. It was natural therefore that her term of service here taught Modjeska much. First she learned from Mr. Jasinski for the first time the proper delivery of blank verse.

<sup>7</sup> One of the circle of friends in the aristocratic and literary world which Modjeska now began to acquire was the Countess Patocka. On the occasion of Modjeska's first visit to her, "her judgment was just and most kind. She said she thought I was unsuited to certain parts, but she was much pleased with my romantic impersonations and also with some of the characters in high comedy. She had seen Rachel and Ristori, and told me I had neither their strong ringing voice nor their tragic statuesque poses. 'You see,' said she, 'they were born with those gifts, and God created you differently. You have, instead of those grand qualities, sensitiveness, intuition, grace'; and then she added, laughingly, 'You are as clever as a snake. You played the other evening the Countess in *The White Camelia* as if you were born among us. Where did you meet countesses?' I answered that she was the only great lady I had ever laid eyes on. 'You see,' said she, 'that was intuition.'"—*Memories and Impressions*.

At his earnest solicitation, and under the sting of remarks by a jealous fellow actress, who advised her to leave serious parts alone, she resolutely undertook tragic characters for the first time. Her parts were sometimes small, sometimes important.<sup>8</sup> After her performance in *Don Carlos*, which came a few months after she joined the company and for which she prepared herself (since Mr. Jasinski had returned to Warsaw), she felt that she had to a degree realized her ambition. She had succeeded in a serious part, and was a recognized member of an important company. She was absorbed and happy in her work and thought of little else.<sup>9</sup> The political troubles of Poland, if not settled, were at least stifled. There was outward calm to match the content with which Modjeska labored during these important years. Those who consider success on the stage easily achieved have only to look at such a period as this in the life of a great actress. She frequently arose at five in the morning and studied and rehearsed all day. She and her brother

<sup>8</sup> Some of her characters at this time were Princess Eboli in *Don Carlos*, by Schiller; Louise Miller in *Kabale und Liebe*, by Schiller; Barbara in the tragedy of that name by Felinski; Ophelia in *Hamlet*; Doña Sol in *Ernani*, by Victor Hugo; the wife in *Nos Intimes*, by Sardou; and Adrienne Lecouvreur in the play of that name by Scribe and Legouv .

<sup>9</sup> "I do not recollect going to parties, save to those given twice a year by the manager, Count Skorupka; one dancing party during the Carnival and another at Easter time, and then I danced! Oh, how I danced! with all my soul in it, for I never did anything by halves. Still I preferred the few receptions at my brother's house."—*Memories and Impressions*.

Felix would go over scenes at all hours and in all places. She carefully worked out the last detail of costuming, of pose or intonation, developing her impersonations to her utmost. And when the time for performance came, she threw herself into her work body and soul. There has always been much discussion as to whether or not an actor, for the best effect, should "feel his part." Modjeska was always one of those who did. "I really passed through all the emotions of my heroines," she afterwards wrote. "I suffered with them, cried real tears, which I often could not stop even after the curtain was down. Owing to this extreme sensitiveness I was exhausted after each emotional part, and often had to rest motionless after the play until my strength returned. I tried hard to master my emotions, but during my whole career I could not succeed in giving a performance without feeling the agonies of my heroines."

It was during a visit of the Cracow Company to Posen, the capital of Prussian Poland, that Madame Modjeska met Count Karol Bozenta Chlapowski, who was soon to be her second husband.<sup>10</sup> He came of a noble Polish family and had served in the revolt of 1863. At the time he met Modjeska (1866) he was a writer on politics and the drama for one of the newspapers of Posen. In this capacity he commented frankly on the shortcomings he found in Modjeska's acting, but his candor did not prevent

<sup>10</sup> Gustave Modrzejewski had died some time before.

their becoming good friends. He coached her in French, and they read and talked much together. It was here, when romance was coming into her own life, that she read for the first time *Romeo and Juliet*. It carried her to the highest pitch of enthusiasm for Shakespeare. At her earnest wish, it was played successfully with Modjeska as Juliet, while the company was in Posen.

Before she returned to Cracow to act, Modjeska was granted leave of six weeks, with the suggestion that she go to Paris and study the best French actors. Paris charmed her, while her visits to the theatres—and every evening found her in one or another—were inspiring to the sensitive young woman on the threshold of her own career. The restraint of the French actors' methods, their admirable grace and precision, their imaginative identification with their characters, and the *ensemble* which is the mark of the French stage at its best, were noted for her own good by the rising Polish star.

She was given an ovation when she reappeared at Cracow. *Romeo and Juliet* was repeated and, to her delight (for Shakespeare was her constant enthusiasm), she had an opportunity to appear as Lady Anne in *Richard the Third*, as Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and as Desdemona in *Othello*. Many plays from the French and German were also given, but the basis of the Cracow theatre's repertoire was naturally Polish.

This was to Modjeska a happy and successful



period. As was her custom, she threw herself into her work with all her energy, and besides her parts studied hard her French, her music, and even an elaborate course in history. Indeed she worked so during this year (1866-7) that one day, during a rehearsal of *Kabale und Liebe* she suddenly lost her memory; she could not think of a word of her part. In two weeks, however, she had recovered and was at work again.

In 1868 she married Count Chlapowski and thereby became a member of the aristocracy. She was not the first actress to marry into the Polish nobility, but in her case, as in none before, the husband's family and society in general welcomed her with open arms. And indeed, in receiving into their number a woman of her personal worth and attainments, they were accepting rather than bestowing honor.

Now came the moment that Modjeska herself always believed to be the turning point in her career. Seven years before, when she and three other amateurs were giving their little plays for charity in Bochnia, she had been seen, it will be remembered, by one of the staff of managers of the Warsaw Imperial Theatre. He had told her that one day he hoped to see her in Warsaw. Now, in 1868, her reputation as one of the leading actresses of the Cracow theatre brought about the fulfillment of his hope, for she was invited to Warsaw to give a special series of performances. As for her, this was the realization of a dream. She did not

then even think of the career she was to have in foreign lands in a language other than Polish. She was intensely patriotic, and the utmost reasonable limit of her ambition was to act in the Imperial Theatre at Warsaw. It was one of the great state theatres of Europe, controlled and subsidized by the Russian Government, and, with its various companies for serious drama, comedy, opera, and comic opera, its ballet, choruses, orchestras, schools, officials and employees, enrolled something over seven hundred people. It was extraordinary for an actress who had not gone through the school and waited her chance of gradual promotion to appear on its stage; and the innovation aroused the keenest hostility among the members of the company. The husband of one of the actresses was an editor, and before Modjeska appeared, attacked her in print. When the newcomer rehearsed for the first time attempts were begun to discredit her. The rehearsal of her part in *Les Idées de Madame Aubray* went so well that she was jubilant until it was suddenly announced that owing to the sickness of one of the actors (who up to now was apparently in perfect health) the play would have to be changed. In the rehearsal Modjeska had shown such ability that the clique arrayed against her knew their point would be lost unless some play were put on that would test her powers more severely. So *Adrienne Lecouvreur* was suggested, a play in which Rachel had been the only one thoroughly to succeed. Modjeska saw the

danger, but agreed to play Adrienne. At rehearsal she little more than "walked through" her part, taking care not to reveal her best powers, lest the unpleasant incident be repeated. The cabal succeeded, however, in playing her another trick: at the last moment another actress, the wife of the hostile editor, was given Modjeska's part of Adrienne for the first performance of the play's revival. This was intended to decrease the interest in Modjeska's first appearance; yet when her night arrived the great house was filled. The controversy over her invitation to Warsaw, and the unusual spectacle of a nobleman's actress-wife continuing to act after her marriage, combined to arouse the keenest interest.

The audience received her cordially, and listened attentively. At the close of the fable of the two pigeons, a passage which she delivered with much charm and tenderness, there was such applause as she had never heard before. After each act she was called out again and again, and at the end of the play received an unprecedented ovation. Even those members of the company who had tried to prevent her appearance were won over by her power, her grace, and her immediate success, and appeared in her dressing-room to congratulate her. Next day all the papers praised her, and during the next week the cards and invitations that formed the tribute of Warsaw society poured in upon her.

Within a few days Modjeska had signed a contract to play at the Imperial Warsaw The-

at the rest of her life, the term of her service to begin in the autumn of 1869, for she had still (in 1868) to complete her season in Cracow. In view of the conditions under which American and English actors, even those of the first rank, are to-day obliged to work, it is interesting to note the terms of Modjeska's contract at Warsaw. She was to have twenty-five thousand florins <sup>11</sup> a year, four months holiday in each year, eight hundred roubles <sup>12</sup> yearly for gowns, and an annual benefit performance. She was to be permitted to act each year in six new plays of her own choice (a great concession on the part of a conservative management) and was to be expected to appear only three times a week! When she departed for Cracow, the people of Warsaw crowded to the station, throwing flowers into her carriage, and shouting their farewells. The visit to Warsaw had indeed been a triumph.

Count Chlapowski's interest in a new political party and his editorship of its daily paper in Cracow brought about him and his wife, who after the end of the season in the spring of 1869 laid aside for the moment her theatrical work, a political and literary *salon*. Poets, patriots, scientific men, artists, all were found at the house of the charming actress and the nobleman-editor.<sup>13</sup> During her three seasons at

<sup>11</sup> Ten thousand dollars.

<sup>12</sup> Over two thousand dollars.

<sup>13</sup> On one occasion Modjeska acted as an impromptu reporter for her husband's paper, proving the reliability of her stage-trained memory. Liebelt, the scientist, delivered a lec-



Cracow she had played one hundred and thirteen parts—an impressive achievement in itself. Modjeska was now expected to act in Warsaw for the rest of her life. Instead, she remained less than seven years.

Her departure was brought about by several causes. It was not long before she became the moving spirit of the whole vast organization. As the extension of the repertoire was largely in her hands, it was to her that translators and authors had to apply. She therefore had considerable responsibility, which she appreciated, concerning the development of the Polish drama. The management found itself deferring to her in all kinds of matters. Moreover, her husband, forced to a choice between his own career and hers, had given up his Cracow interests, and together in Warsaw they soon found themselves the center of social interest. Their *salon* became an established and brilliant affair. Her domination of an artistic and social world to which she was a newcomer naturally aroused envy, and resulting attempts to make her uncomfortable had their part in wearying her of Warsaw. Then, in her ambition to enlarge and enrich the theatre's repertoire, she had constantly to combat the autocracy and unintelligence of the Russian

ture on Spectrum Analysis, and as no stenographic reporter was to be had, Modjeska went to the hall, listened intently to the lecturer and although the subject was absolutely new to her, went home and wrote a complete résumé of the lecture, technical and Latin words included. Her report was printed, while that of a reporter was used merely as an introduction.

censorship. When she wished to produce *Hamlet* the censor objected to a play in which a King was murdered, as a possible suggestion of disloyal ideas, and it was only when he was shown that the murder was a family affair, not a public assassination, that he reluctantly relented. To another play he objected on the ground that it contained a Polish king, to a Russian an unthinkable person. The king had to be changed to a prince. Covert allusions to the wrongs of Poland were suspected where none existed and even certain words were taboo. A love passage might be suspected to be an apostrophe to the oppressed mother country; the word "slave" was considered objectionable, and "negro" substituted; if a character said: "I love my country and my people," his affections were transferred by official order to his wife and children, and, in one play the words: "He walked arm in arm with the emperor and whispered in his ear," were changed to "He walked three steps behind the emperor and whispered in his ear"! Such obstructions to Modjeska's plans, though often amusing, were oftener maddening.

In 1875 Madame Mouchanoff, the wife of the president of the Warsaw theatre, died. A woman of great refinement, intellect, and force, she had befriended and inspired Modjeska, and the loss of her was severe. In the same year Felix Benda died, another blow, for her half-brother had been a good friend and wise counselor. In the meantime Modjeska had herself had a se-

vere illness. Now, in the spring of 1876, the nervousness induced by her strenuous career on the stage and in society combined with sorrow over the attacks on her and irritation with the censor to induce a melancholy, a pessimism, that brought her to a dangerous state of discouragement and ill-health.

One night the Chlapowskis and their guests were discussing America and the coming Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia. At first in jest, a general emigration to America was suggested. They would have there an ideal community, a care-free natural life far removed from Russian oppression, and Pani Helena<sup>14</sup> could have her much needed rest. The idea took root. The would-be emigrants were thought foolish by most of their friends, but Henryk Sienkiewicz (afterwards the famous author of *Quo Vadis?*), Count Chlapowski himself, his friends Jules Sypniewski and Lucian Paprocki, were all soon in deadly earnest. California they had heard of as an earthly paradise, where life was idyllic and the earth yielded up not only an easily won living, but fortune.

The suddenly achieved result was that Sienkiewicz sailed for America in a few months, and the others arranged to follow. Modjeska obtained leave of absence from the president of the theatre, who cheerfully expected her to come back, but fixed a forfeit of six thousand roubles if she did not. In June, 1876, she appeared in Warsaw for the last time. There was a

<sup>14</sup> "Mrs. Helena."

great popular demonstration. The house was crowded and to the highest degree enthusiastic. After the performance the audience formed a double rank to the gates of the theatre grounds and shouted their farewells and praises. The public, at least, was with her to the last.<sup>15</sup>

In July, 1876, she sailed from Bremen for New York, with Count Chlapowski, her son Rudolphe, Jules Sypniewski, his wife and two children, and Lucian Paprocki,—a strange band of pilgrims, artists with little but their ideals and comradeship to fit them for pioneering in a strange country, headed by a woman who was giving up a career of *grande dame* and *première artiste* for the prospect of life on a farm eight thousand miles or so from the scene of her triumphs!

Modjeska had never seen the ocean, and the voyage of thirteen days was invigorating. Her party spent about a month in New York, making excursions to Philadelphia to see the exposition, where she admired the vegetables and fruits from California, experimented with those dainties new to her, pop-corn and peanuts, and found them tasteless, and visited the art exhibits. New York of 1876 she thought a "monstrous, untidy bazaar." In August they started for California, taking ship for Panama.

<sup>15</sup> Her repertoire at Warsaw had been wide-ranged and long, embracing translations of Shakespeare, and of many French and German plays as well as the numerous Polish parts. She introduced the obvious but hitherto neglected method of playing Shakespeare in a Polish translation directly from the English, instead of through a French version.



She found charming her first glimpse of the tropics, during the railroad trip across the Isthmus, and the three weeks' voyage on the Pacific went far to restore her vigor and peace of mind.

The impression has been that Modjeska returned to the stage because of the failure of the farming experiment which was now to be made. To a certain extent this is true, but even before she reached California she certainly had vague plans to act again. In a letter from New York she had said: "It seems that I may be able to play in English, but first we must go to California, according to our original plan. . . . Perhaps after we get established in this new paradise I may pick up enough English to play there, and when I get more mastery over the new language, I may come here; for, however unattractive New York seems to me, it is the metropolis of America, and it will give me pleasure to conquer it." This was surely forecasting the future. When she reached San Francisco, Edwin Booth was playing there. It was proposed that she act Ophelia in Polish, to his *Hamlet*. Rather to her relief, Booth, who had never heard of her, declined. She saw him as Antony and as Shylock and of course recognized him as the great actor that he was, though as yet she could not understand English.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In 1877 Edwin Booth had, rightly enough, declined to play with Modjeska. In 1889, however, it was another story. Lawrence Barrett, at that time Booth's manager, proposed her appearance as a "co-star." Modjeska gladly availed herself of the opportunity to act with Mr. Booth, and played with him in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado*

As for the community farming experiment at Anaheim, it was a failure that would appear ludicrous if it were not for its element of tragedy. All of the experimenters were desperately homesick, and none of them had the least practical notion of the task they had set themselves. They talked more than they worked, quarreled and made up, and were generally helpless. Modjeska, the queen of the Warsaw stage, did the cooking, with the frightened assistance of a Polish maid they had taken from a convent to be a helper with the children.<sup>17</sup> They had several cows, but no one knew how to milk them, and their butter and milk they had to buy. The orange trees were too young to bear, the season was dry, the neighbors' cattle ate the barley, the dogs ate the eggs, and the ready money was fast disappearing. The unfortunate town-bred would-be farmers were

*about Nothing, and Richelieu.* The tour took them throughout the East and the Middle West.

<sup>17</sup> The entire party would leave their farm and go on short vacation trips. Of one of these, Modjeska says: "I listened and looked at everything, but I grew quite sad when I turned my eyes toward the ocean. The blue waters of the great Pacific reminded me of our first sea-voyage when we left our country. The recollections of the happy past, spent among beloved people,—Cracow, with its churches and monuments, the kind friends waiting for our return, the stage, and the dear public I left behind,—all came back to my mind, and I felt a great acute pang of homesickness. I stepped away from the rest, threw myself on the sand and sobbed and sobbed, mingling my moans with those of the ocean, until, exhausted, I had not one drop of tears left in my eyes. A sort of torpor took the place of despair, and the world became a vast emptiness, sad and without any charm."

doomed to failure from the start. So Modjeska determined upon the courageous and difficult course which brought in time so great an addition to her fame. She decided to go to San Francisco, learn English, and go upon the American stage.

In March, 1877, she wrote from San Francisco to a friend in Poland: "I am hard at work, studying. That was my secret plan, at the very beginning of our venture. Country life was simply to restore my health and strength, which it did so effectively that people give me twenty-four or twenty-six years of age, not more . . . Next autumn I want to ask the president<sup>18</sup> which he prefers, either six thousand roubles for breaking my contract, or my return in two years with fame."

She could not have returned to Warsaw, indeed, had she wished to do so, for she was now poor. She even sold some of her family silver to maintain herself and her son in San Francisco while Mr. Chlapowski<sup>19</sup> was winding up the affairs of the farm. With a young Polish-American woman as tutor, she labored incessantly with English, and to such good effect that in about six months, having gotten Adrienne and Juliet letter-perfect, she applied for an engagement at the California Theatre. John

<sup>18</sup> Of the Imperial Theatre in Warsaw.

<sup>19</sup> He became an American citizen and dropped his title of nobility. Because of the difficulty in pronouncing Chlapowski, he was known in America by his second name, and was called Mr. Bozenta.

McCullough was the star and manager, but he was absent. His representative, Barton Hill, knew nothing of Madame Modjeska and told her there was no opportunity to engage her as a star. Her friend the tutor persisted, and obtained an appointment for a hearing, but when Modjeska presented herself at the theatre he found himself unable to keep the engagement. She was deeply discouraged. A star of the first magnitude at home, here she had to beg for a hearing, and then be refused. When she again applied at the theatre and Mr. Hill sent word that he was too busy to see her, she was genuinely humiliated. Some Polish friends interceded, however, and a rehearsal was arranged. Mr. Hill at last heard her, in an act of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. He was unprepared for what he was to experience, for so far as he knew she was merely another "society woman" with a craze for the stage. She was stung to her best efforts, and at the end of the scene Mr. Hill was a changed man.<sup>20</sup> Modjeska was to have a

<sup>20</sup> "Hill was a worthy man and a good actor . . . but there will always be something ludicrous in the thought of Barton Hill sitting in judgment on Helena Modjeska. 'He was very kind—Meester Hill,' said the actress; 'but he was ne-ervous and fussy, and he patronized me as though I were a leetle child. "Now," he said, "I shall be very criti-cal—ve-ery severe." I could be patient no longer: "Be as critical and severe as you like," I burst out, "only do, please, *be quiet*, and let us begin!" He was so surprised he could not speak, and I began at once a scene from *Adrienne*. I played it through and then turned to him. He had his handkerchief in his hand and was crying. He came and shook hands with me and tried to seem quite calm. "Well," I asked, "may I have the



week, more if possible. She had to go through another trial when Mr. McCullough returned, but the result was a fortnight's engagement. On the first night, playing in a strange tongue, she was quite free from nervousness, and knowing the part well did it full justice. She sent a dispatch of a single word, "Victory," to her husband; the newspapers pronounced her appearance "the most confirmed dramatic triumph that ever occurred in the city"; Sienkiewicz, then in San Francisco, sent a glowing letter to his Warsaw paper, and Modjeska's American career was launched.<sup>21</sup>

The next morning at eight o'clock an enterprising theatrical manager called to propose her appearance in the eastern cities. In December, 1877, after less than a year's study of English she appeared as a star in New York. The story of her career in Poland had been one of long continued striving, of years of mingled hard work and disappointment, and of final brilliant success. In America, by what has become in stage annals a classical example of will and courage, she attained equally brilliant suc-

evening that I want?" "I'll give you a week, and more, if I can," he answered.'"—William Winter, *The Wallet of Time*.

<sup>21</sup> It was John McCullough who at this time suggested the modification of her name. Her professional name in Poland had always remained Modrzejewska. When confronted with this, McCullough said: "Who on earth could read that, I wonder? I fear you will be compelled to change your name, Madame." She suggested Modgeska, which he smilingly said would remind people of Madagascar. The "g" was changed to "j." "Now," McCullough said, "it is quite easy to read, and sounds pretty, I think."

cess in a few weeks, in a foreign land and in a recently acquired tongue.

It was not long before Modjeska was firmly established as an international artist—a title that has been applied with justification to actresses only very rarely. From this time, in the early eighties, until the close of the century she led the life of such an artist—known to the theatregoers of two continents as no other of her time save only Bernhardt. Her American tours brought her before the public throughout the country, her name was equally familiar in the various cities of the British Isles, while during her frequent visits to Poland she acted in her own tongue among those to whom she had become one of the country's glories.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Her first appearance in New York was in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. The other plays of that season and the one following were *Romeo and Juliet*; *Camille*; *Frou-Frou*; *Peg Woffington* (in which she failed); and *East Lynne* (which she heartily disliked).

*Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Camille* were for many years retained in her repertoire. Her appearances in other plays were as follows: *Heartsease* (adaptation of *Camille*), London, 1880; *Marie Stuart*, London, 1880; *Juana*, (a failure, by W. G. Wills), London, 1881; *A Doll's House*, Warsaw, 1882; *Odette*, London, 1882; *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, New York, 1882; *Nadjezda* (by Maurice Barrymore), 1884; *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Cymbeline*, and *Prince Zillah*, season of 1885-6; *Les Chouans*, *Measure for Measure*, *Dona Diana*, and *Daniela*, 1886; with Edwin Booth, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Richelieu*, 1889; *Countess Roudine* (by Paul Kester and Minnie Maddern Fiske), and *Henry VIII*, 1892; *The Tragic Mask*, 1893; *Magda*, 1894; *Mistress Betty Singleton* (by Clyde Fitch), 1895; *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1898; *The Ladies' Battle*, 1900; *Marie Antoinette* (by Clinton Stuart) and *King John*, 1900. In a letter furnishing some

In seeking the reasons for Modjeska's brilliant success and in estimating her as an actress, one at once recognizes that she was first of all a woman of great charm, dignity and intelligence. She was a *grande dame*, a woman who was also a "lady," in the best sense of that miscellaneous word. Her friendships in her native Poland included literally almost every one who was distinguished or gave promise of being so. Though born among the people, by unaffected personal worth she found herself at once at home among the aristocracy into which she mar-

of the above dates, Modjeska's husband, who died in Cracow, in March, 1914, wrote from Rzegocin, Posen, July 10, 1913:

"*The Tragic Mask* was written by Mr. E. Reynolds. It was an original play, somewhat deficient in construction; but the dialogue was very clever. *Daniela* was a translation from a German play by Phillippi. The translators were Hamilton Bell and Moritz von Sachs. As to *Les Chouans*: This was an adaptation of Balzac's novel of the same title, made in French by the well-known actor and dramatist, Pierre Berton, and translated by Paul Potter.

"In addition to the abovesaid repertoire it must be mentioned that Madame Modjeska played *A Doll's House* not only in Poland, but also in America, in Louisville, in the season of 1883-1884. This was, to my knowledge, the first production of Ibsen on an English-speaking stage. Though the part of Nora was considered in Poland, I think rightly, one of Modjeska's best ones, *A Doll's House* did not appeal then to the American public. According to local critics, and especially to Henry Watterson, the audiences were not yet ripe for Ibsen.

"Besides the plays you enumerated, Mme. Modjeska appeared yet in a few others on special occasions. Thus, in the spring of 1884, in Cincinnati at a dramatic festival, she played Desdemona to Tom Keene's Othello. In 1905 in Los Angeles, she took part in a charitable performance and played Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, and in the summer of 1907

ried, an aristocracy of genuine breeding and simplicity. As we shall see, her record of friendships in England and America was of the kind that is achieved only by a choice spirit.

Provided she remains herself simple and well-poised, a woman of this sort, when placed on the stage, has an obvious advantage in parts such as Modjeska's over the woman who with equal technical ability has not had the same experience of the world. Without in the least forfeiting acting ability or a capacity for identi-

appeared equally for charity in a little French comedy entitled *The Spark*. To be complete, I must yet mention a short proverb by Hamilton Aide, produced in London in a reception for the Prince of Wales in 1883, the name of which has escaped my memory.

"But Mme. Modjeska did not play only in English in America. She gave two consecutive performances in Chicago in Polish for charitable purposes, supported by a company of amateur workingmen. One was a comic part in a popular peasant comedy, the other a tragic queen in a historical drama. Twice also she played in French: once in 1884 in London in a graceful proverb of Augier entitled *The Postscriptum*; she was supported by the above-named Pierre Berton. The second time she acted in French in Los Angeles in 1907 for the 'French Alliance' in that beautiful one-act drama *Le Pater*. As I mentioned her several charity performances, I may be allowed to remark that Mme. Modjeska rarely omitted an occasion to appear for charitable objects. In January, 1909, about ten weeks before her end, already then very weak and ill, she took part in a great benefit performance for the victims of the Messina earthquake, in Los Angeles, giving the sleepwalking scene of *Macbeth*.

"I will add that outside of the twelve Shakespearean plays mentioned by you, and the two named above by me, Madame Modjeska acted in Poland in two more—*Richard III* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Her repertoire on the Polish stage known to me consisted of more than one hundred and ten parts."



fyiing herself with a character, Modjeska was plainly a gracious and noble-spirited woman. This quality came over the footlights to her audience and was one of the secrets of her appeal. "To mention her name, as the years drift away, will be to recall a presence of stately dignity, of tender poetic beauty, of exquisite refinement, and of perfect grace. . . . Her ministration as an actress has taught again the old and precious lesson that poetry is not a dream."<sup>23</sup>

Modjeska's art was fine tempered, subtle, delicate. She was not physically robust, her voice was not the great tragic voice of a Rachel, nor had it the thrilling tones of a Mary Anderson. And there was always between her and her English speaking audiences the intangible film of difference of speech, for obviously her pronunciation could never be perfect. Yet by a genuinely dramatic insight that was indisputably hers, a spontaneous naturalness of word and gesture, and her great power of quiet intensity, she achieved a forcefulness far beyond that possible to mere physical and vocal effort.

An example of her individual quality is afforded by her impersonation of the heroine of *Camille*. In the hands of other actresses the play had seemed "a piece that befogs moral perceptions and perplexes all sentiments of right and duty." Yet Modjeska's Margu rite Gauthier redeemed the play and made its heroine a real and tragic woman. "As we think upon it," said William Winter, "there rises in

<sup>23</sup> William Winter in the New York *Tribune*.

fancy a lithe, willowy figure, just touched with a kind of strange richness—and whose every movement is perfect grace. The face is pallid with sorrow; the large, dark, liquid eyes are full of mournful light; the voice pierces to the heart in its tones of supplication, and vibrates with a nameless thrill of despairing agony. This figure obeys in every motion the feeling that possesses it. The tumult of self-reproach, the bitterness of doubt, the ecstasy of contented and confiding love, the mingled torment and sublimity of enforced self-sacrifice, the devotion to virtuous purpose, and the conflict betwixt earthly hope and heavenly resignation are all expressed by it with the elements of absolute sincerity and in a form responsive to the nicest touch of the guiding thought which controls every particle of the work. It is impossible to recognize with too much acceptance the splendid mechanism with which the *artiste* acts. It is a network of movement, attitudes, gestures, pauses, glances, and quiet, indescribable, subtle suggestions which, altogether, is faultless in delicacy and superb in completeness." This comes from one who watched Modjeska's career with the kindly interest of a friend, but it states with fairness, if with enthusiasm, the distinctive qualities of Modjeska's acting.

Great, however, as were Modjeska's achievements as a tragic actress, it was in Shakespearian comedy, that, in the opinion of many, she succeeded most individually. Hers was essentially the imaginative style of acting, and to

Rosalind, Viola, Beatrice and Portia she gave character and individuality as well as charm and grace. "To get out of myself," she said of her work, "to forget all about Helena Modjeska, to throw my whole soul into the assumed character, to lead its life, to be moved by its emotions, thrilled by its passions, to suffer or rejoice,—in one word, to identify myself with it and reincarnate another soul and body, this became my ideal, the goal of all my aspirations, and at the same time the enchantment and attraction of my work." Thus her Rosalind and her Viola were not mere graceful, spirited women. There was, besides, an idealization that lifted them into the realm of poetry and a sense of impersonation that was a fitting response to the imagination with which the characters were conceived.

With Modjeska's first American tour began the formation of that circle of friendships outside the theatre that would alone mark her as an extraordinary woman. The names must suffice: Longfellow, Richard Watson Gilder, Grant, Sherman, Henry Watterson, Eugene Field; and in Europe: Tennyson, Lowell, Alma-Tadema, Burne-Jones, Watts, Justin McCarthy, George Brandes, Hans von Bülow. With Longfellow, perhaps, was her most cherished friendship. During her first visit to Boston he called on her at her hotel and she and her son went to his house in Cambridge. "I said I would gladly study some passages from his poems and recite them to him, and I mentioned *Hiawatha*,

but he stopped me with the words: 'You do not want to waste your time in memorizing those things, and don't you speak of *Hiawatha*, or I will call you Mudjikewis, which, by the way, sounds somewhat like your name.' " <sup>24</sup>

It was Longfellow who urged Modjeska to act in London—the very summit of her ambition. When in 1880 she had repeated there her American success he wrote to her: "Now I can add my congratulations on your triumphal entry into London. How pleasant it is to be able to say, 'I told you so!' And did I not tell you so? Am I not worthy to be counted among the Minor Prophets? I cannot tell you how greatly rejoiced I am at this new success—this new wreath of laurel." For London was immediately won. Public, critics, society and fellow actors united to make her welcome.

Poland, a small and unhappy country, has done more than its share in furnishing the world with artists. With some of the most famous of them Modjeska's name is curiously linked. Paderewski, during her visit to Poland in 1884, used to come to visit her. He was then a young man of twenty-one whom it was impossible to keep away from the piano. She encouraged him, overcame his doubts as to his fitness for a public career, and that summer they appeared in the same program in Cracow. They were friends during the rest of her life, and it was Paderewski who in 1905 inspired the

<sup>24</sup> *Memories and Impressions.*



great farewell testimonial to Modjeska in New York. "The first encouraging words I heard as a pianist," he wrote, "came from her lips; the first successful concert I had in my life was due to her assistance." It was she, too, who years before, in a Polish mountain summer resort, first brought Jan and Eduard de Reszke before an audience. They were both then under twenty.

In 1893 Madame Modjeska was one of four actresses <sup>25</sup> who addressed the Women's Congress at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. Besides her appearance before the Congress as an actress, she was asked to speak on another occasion as a representative of Poland. The women who were expected from Poland evidently feared the Czar's displeasure in case they spoke frankly concerning their country, and failed to appear in Chicago. But Modjeska spoke her mind freely concerning the grievances of the Poles. She was widely quoted in the papers, and news of her speech reached St. Petersburg. Playing two years later in Poland, she was about to act in Warsaw when word came from the Russian government forbidding her appearance. Plans were made for an engagement in St. Petersburg itself, but at the last moment, when large sums had already been spent in preparation, she was told that her appearance in the capital was forbidden. Shortly afterwards Modjeska and her

<sup>25</sup> The others being Clara Morris, Georgia Cayvan, and Julia Marlowe.

husband were ordered to leave Warsaw, and an imperial decree was issued to the effect that they were never thereafter to enter any part of the Russian territory. Efforts were often made to obtain permission to go to Warsaw, but to the end of her life Modjeska was excluded from the Czar's dominions.<sup>26</sup>

In April, 1905, Madame Modjeska, then living in practical retirement in California, received a letter signed by a number of authors, fellow actors and artists in New York which acknowledged in affectionate terms their debt and gratitude for her career, and offered her a public testimonial in New York. This was the idea of Paderewski, who had visited her in California but a short time before and like many others was disturbed by the lack of public acclaim with which she was modestly sinking into retirement.<sup>27</sup> The great pianist, much to his distress,

<sup>26</sup> This prohibition did not apply to Austrian or Prussian Poland, of course, and she afterwards acted more than once in Cracow, Lemberg, and Posen.

<sup>27</sup> "During her long professional career, though Modjeska was 'presented' by various managers, her personal representative was her husband, Bozenta,—one of the kindest, most intellectual, and most drolly eccentric men it has been my fortune to know. Neither he nor his wife was judicious in worldly matters, while—as is not unusual in such cases—both thought themselves exceptionally shrewd and capable. Their professional labors were abundantly remunerative, but, being improvident and generous, they did not accumulate wealth. The close of Modjeska's life, contrasted with the brilliancy of her career, was pathetic and forlorn. I called on her, a few months before her death, in the refuge, a little cottage, she had found, at East Newport. The great actress greeted me with gentle kindness and presently, as though my coming had reminded her of other days and scenes, she looked

was prevented by an accident from being present, but the best known actors appearing in New York at the time lent their services. Modjeska herself played scenes from *Macbeth* and *Mary Stuart*. Edmund Clarence Stedman presented to Madame Modjeska a memorial scroll bearing signatures of her many friends, actors, actresses, and her "attached votaries in other walks of life—all made associates," Mr. Stedman said in addressing her, "by their delight in your genius and career. A quarter-century ago you came to us from a land invested with traditions of valor, beauty, and romance, from the brave and soulful country that flashed its sword in our behalf and that in our own times enthralls us with music,<sup>28</sup> and through you with impassioned tenderness and artistic power. The felicities of art are limitless, and, as in creations of our master playwright you found the most alluring range for your own

about the small narrow room in which we were. 'Ah, it ees small,' she said, 'very small, this place of ours. But, what of that? It ees large enough for two old people to sit in—and wait.' As I came away her lovely eyes were suffused with tears. She looked at me long and fixedly. 'Good-by, my good friend,' was all she said. She seemed to foresee that it was our last parting."—(William Winter, *The Wallet of Time*.) It is not to be thought from this that Modjeska died poor. Of the vast sum (said to be \$800,000) that she earned on the American stage, she left at her death something over \$100,000, in California real estate, stocks and bonds, and jewelry. It is true, however, that she was lavishly generous, and that her bounty was bestowed in many places, private and public. She was the founder of an industrial school for girls in Cracow, for which she gave \$100,000.

<sup>28</sup> A reference to Sembrich and Paderewski.

powers, so your fresh impersonations woke in us the sense of 'something rich and strange.' "

Modjeska, with tears in her eyes and her voice breaking with emotion, briefly expressed her gratitude.

"Long may your enviable years flow on," Mr. Stedman had said. But it was only four years later that she died,<sup>29</sup> in California, where she had always maintained her home, in a beautiful country place she called Arden, not far from the scene of that ill-starred venture which after all had its justification in giving to America a great actress. She was buried in Cracow, the city of her birth.

"Hail to thee upon thy return to thy last resting place," said Michael Tarasiewicz at her funeral, "welcome thou, who might say of thyself as did Countess Idalia: 'I am here as a passing angel. I have let thee see the lightning and disappeared upon the firmament of the sky.' . . . For thy art, for thy constant work, for that thou hast never become renegade to thy ideal, and that, in perfecting thy soul, thou hast been perfecting the soul of humanity, be blessed."

<sup>29</sup> April 8, 1909, on Bay Island, East Newport, California, whither she had moved from "Arden" but a few months before. Her final appearance on the stage was in the spring of 1907.





ELLEN TERRY



## ELLEN TERRY

THERE was, in Sir Walter Scott's day, an actor named Daniel Terry, who was a part proprietor of the Adelphi Theatre in London. He was furnished funds for that venture by Sir Walter, and according to Lockhart enjoyed a large share of Scott's regard and confidence. An effort has sometimes been made to identify this Terry with the family that in the latter half of the nineteenth century furnished England with some of her most accomplished stage artists. But the connection was one of name only, for Benjamin Terry, the father of Ellen, was the son of an Irish builder, and eloped with the daughter of a Scottish minister.

Benjamin Terry and his wife, the parents of Ellen, were both actors, not reckoned among the brilliant stars of their day, but respectably talented, well-trained actors of the old school, better known in the provinces than in the metropolis. Benjamin Terry was "a handsome, fine-looking brown-haired man," and his wife "a tall, graceful creature, with an abundance of fair hair, and with big blue eyes set in a charming face." On the outlying "circuits," in Edinburgh, and later in the London

company of Charles Kean, they were reasonably successful in their profession; but their distinction—and a sufficient one surely—is their remarkable family of sons and daughters. “Think of it,” wrote Clement Scott; “Kate, with her lovely figure and comely features; Ellen, with her quite indescribable charm; Marion, with a something in her deeper, more tender, and more feminine than either of them; Florence, who became lovelier as a woman than as a girl; and the brothers Fred and Charles, both splendid specimens of the athletic Englishman.”<sup>1</sup>

It was while Benjamin Terry and his wife were playing in Coventry that, on February 27, 1848, their second daughter, Ellen Alicia, was born. Coventry is proud of the fact, and there has been a rather brisk dispute as to which house was the birthplace.<sup>2</sup>

From her earliest childhood, Ellen Terry knew the theatre and its people. She was not one of those who, like Mary Anderson or Modjeska, are forced to cherish ambitions in secret, for naturally and inevitably the theatre ab-

<sup>1</sup> These brothers and sisters were all actors or actresses except Charles, who was a stage manager, and the father of the actresses Minnie and Beatrice Terry. Mr. Scott does not mention another brother—George—who was identified with the business side of the theatre. Fred Terry married the actress Julia Neilson, and their daughter, Phyllis Neilson-Terry, is today among the most promising young women on England's stage. There were two other brothers, Ben and Thomas, and three children died—twelve in all.

<sup>2</sup> No. 5 Market Street makes out the best case.



sorbed her. She and her sister Kate, four years her elder, were in their early girlhood as firmly established as popular favorites as actresses of that age can be.

Ellen Terry's fame has exceeded that of any other of Benjamin Terry's large family, but when she began her stage career she was naturally known as Kate Terry's little sister. Before Ellen made her first appearance, at the age of eight, Kate had achieved marked success, for a child, in Charles Kean's company, and until she was twenty-three, when she married and retired from the stage, she was recognized as one of England's leading actresses. The third of the Terry sisters, Marion, and the youngest, Florence, had less distinguished but creditable careers. There has not been a better instance of the hereditary beauty and talent that occasionally concentrate in theatrical families.

Benjamin Terry and his wife became members of the company which about the middle of the century the younger Kean gathered at the Princess's Theatre. Whatever the disappointments of Charles Kean's career, he was earnestly devoted to his art, he greatly developed the scenic equipment of the stage of his day, and he made the Princess's Theatre an excellent school of acting.

Benjamin Terry not only acted parts at the Princess's, but assisted with the productions and stage-management. Naturally enough, when Kean's series of Shakespearean revivals

required the appearance of children, the young Terry sisters were chosen. They had received what training their parents could give them. "It must be remembered," Ellen Terry long afterward wrote, "that my sister and I had the advantage of exceedingly clever and conscientious parents, who spared no pains to bring out and perfect any talents that we possessed. My father was a very charming elocutionist, and my mother read Shakespeare beautifully, and they both were very fond of us and saw our faults with eyes of love, though they were unsparing in their corrections. And, indeed, they had need of all their patience; for my own part, I know I was a most troublesome, wayward pupil." Her father was constantly calling for impromptu rehearsals of her lines—at the table, in the street or 'bus—whenever opportunity came. She remembers vividly going into a drug store, where her father stood her on a chair to say her part for the proprietor.

Trained for the stage from her earliest childhood, and destined unquestioningly for the career of an actress, her first appearance came and went so much as a matter of course that there has remained some uncertainty as to the date and part. Miss Terry herself declares for April 28, 1856, and Mamillius, in *The Winter's Tale*. Much painstaking research has been applied to the question, confirming her strong impression. Yet Dutton Cook said he remembered seeing Kate and Ellen Terry as

the two princes in *Richard III*, and wrote: "My recollection of Ellen Terry dates from her impersonation of the little Duke of York. She was a child of six, or thereabout, slim and dainty of form, with profuse flaxen curls, and delicately featured face, curiously bright and arch of expression; and she won, as I remember, her first applause when, in clear resonant tones, she delivered the lines:

'Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me;  
Because that I am little, like an ape,  
He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders'

Richard's representative [Charles Kean] meanwhile scowling wickedly and tugging at his gloves desperately, pursuant to paternal example and stage tradition. A year or two later and the baby actress was representing now Mamillius and now Puck."

Mr. Cook's recollection is not borne out by the play bills, however, and it may safely be said that Ellen Terry's first appearance was as Mamillius when she was eight years old.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Her own memory is perhaps not an infallible guide, but in a characteristic letter (September 26, 1887) to Clement Scott she was emphatic enough: "Mr. Dutton Cook's statement was inaccurate, that's all! I didn't contradict it, although asked to do so by my father at the time, for I thought it of little, if of any interest. The very first time I ever appeared on any stage was on the first night of *The Winter's Tale*, at the Princess's Theatre, with dear Charles Kean. As for the young princes,—them unfortunate little men, I never played—not neither of them—there. What a cry about a little wool! It's flattering to be fussed about, but 'Fax is Fax!'"

Miss Terry has given us her own impressions of her first night as Mamillius. "How my young heart swelled with pride—I can recall the sensation now—when I was told what I had to do. There is something in a woman's nature which always makes her recollect how she was dressed at any especially eventful moment of her life, and I can see myself, as though it were yesterday, in my little red and white coat—very short—*very* pink silk stockings, and a row of tight sausage curls—my mother was always very careful that they should be in perfect order and regularity—clustered round my head. A small go-cart, which it was my duty to drag about the stage, was also a keen source of pride, and a great trouble to me. My first dramatic failure dates from that go-cart. I was told to run about with it on the stage, and while carrying out my instructions with more vigor than discretion, tripped over the handle, and down I came on my back. A titter ran through the house, and I felt that my career as an actress was ruined forever. Bitter and copious were the tears I shed—but I am not sure that the incident has materially altered the course of my life."<sup>4</sup> The *Times* concluded its review of the production with the words: "And last—aye, and least too—Miss Ellen

<sup>4</sup> Another childish blunder marks Miss Terry's only meeting with the great actor Macready. She accidentally jostled him while running to her dressing-room. He smiled at her apology, and said: "Never mind, you are a very polite little girl, and you act very earnestly and speak very nicely."



Terry plays the boy Mamillius with a vivacious precocity that proves her a worthy relative of her sister Miss Kate."

She had soon played not only Mamillius, but also Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Prince Arthur in *King John*, Fleance in *Macbeth* and other childish parts in plays less well remembered. "In those days," says Miss Terry, "I was cast for many a 'dumb' part. I walked on in *The Merchant of Venice* carrying a basket of doves; in *Richard II* I climbed up a pole in the street scene; in *Henry VIII* I was 'top angel' in the vision, and I remember that the heat of the gas at that dizzy height made me sick at the dress rehearsal! I was a little boy 'cheering' in several other productions. . . . In *The Merchant of Venice* I was firmly convinced that the basket of doves which I carried on my shoulder was the principal attraction of the scene in which it appeared. The other little boys and girls in the company regarded those doves with eyes of bitter envy. One little chorus boy, especially, though he professed a personal devotion of the tenderest kind for me, could never quite get over those doves."

It is not to be thought that the young Terry sisters were merely attractive and clever children. They were applauded, wrote Dutton Cook, "not simply because of their cleverness and prettiness, their graces of aspect, the careful training they evidenced, and the pains they

took, but because of the leaven of genius discernible in all their performances—they were born actresses. . . . Here were little players who could not merely repeat accurately the words they had learnt by rote, but could impart sentiment to their speeches, could identify themselves with the characters they played, could personate and portray.”

Thus Ellen Terry’s training began early and rigorously. “When I was a child,” she wrote long afterwards, “rehearsals often used to last until four or five in the morning. What weary work it was to be sure! My poor little legs used to ache, and sometimes I could hardly keep my eyes open when I was on the stage. Often I used to creep into the green-room, and there, curled up in the deep recess of the window, forget myself, my troubles, and my art—if you can talk of art in connection with a child of eight—in a delicious sleep.” In the years to come Ellen Terry rose to distinction first of all by virtue of her radiant, charming personality and a natural gift for acting. But only less important has been the infinitely varied, toilsome schooling in actual experience, thus so early begun.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Miss Terry relates the rise and fall of her childish vanity at this time: “The parts we play influence our characters to some extent, and Puck made me a bit of a romp. I grew vain and rather ‘cocky,’ and it was just as well that during the rehearsals for the Christmas pantomime in 1857, I was tried for the part of the fairy Dragonetta and rejected. [The children’s parts at the Princess’s were assigned after competitive trials. For Mamillius “Nelly” had been chosen out

When Ellen was twelve Charles Kean's management of the Princess's came to an end. Her parents at once took advantage of the measure of popularity which the sisters had acquired and presented them in a "drawing-room entertainment." It consisted of two short plays in which Ellen and Kate assumed all the characters, of both sexes. The venture was a success, and the little troupe, father, mother, two daughters and a pianist, traveled far and wide throughout the Kingdom for more than two years, driving from place to place in the primitive style of strolling players.

Returning to London, Ellen Terry, whose

of half a dozen aspirants.] I believe that my failure was principally due to the fact that I hadn't flashing eyes and raven hair—without which, as every one knows, no bad fairy can hold up her head and respect herself . . . Only the extreme beauty of my dress as the maudlin 'good fairy' Goldenstar, consoled me. I used to think I looked beautiful in it. I wore a trembling star in my forehead, too, which was enough to upset any girl." A little later: "I think my part in *Pizarro* saw the last of my vanity. I was a worshiper of the sun and, in a pink feather, pink swathings of muslin, and black arms, I was again struck by my own beauty. I grew quite attached to the looking glass which reflected that feather! Then suddenly there came a change. *I began to see the whole thing.* My attentive watching of other people began to bear fruit, and the labor and perseverance, care and intelligence, which had gone to make these enormous productions dawned on my young mind. Up to this time I had loved acting because it was great fun, but I had not loved the grind. After I began to rehearse Prince Arthur in *King John*, I understood that if I did not work I could not act! And I wanted to work. I used to get up in the middle of the night and watch my gestures in the glass. I used to try my voice and bring it up and down in the right places. And all my vanity fell away from me."

name seems already to have been fairly well established, had a part at the Royalty Theatre in a dreadful play founded on Sue's *Atar-Gull*. It was her rôle in this gruesome drama to appear on the stage wrapped in the coils of a huge serpent, and shrieking the terror appropriate to the situation. This was at least an opportunity for one kind of acting and Miss Terry made the most of it. The contemporary accounts show that she shrieked most startlingly and whole-heartedly.

Kate Terry had joined the stock company at Bristol, and there Ellen, when she was fourteen, went also. For a year she had the sound training—the best an actor can have—of acting many widely varying parts. “If I had to describe her acting in those days,” wrote a member of the company, “I should say its chief characteristic was a vivacious sauciness. Her voice already had some of the rich sympathetic quality which has since been one of her most distinctive charms. Although only in the first flush of a joyous girlhood, she was yet familiar enough with the stage to be absolutely at home on it. . . . We, the young fellows of that day, thought she was perfection; we toasted her in our necessarily frugal measures; we would gladly have been her hewers of wood and drawers of water. She had personal charm as well as histrionic skill. Her smiles were very sweet, but, alack for all of us, they were mathematically impartial.” During this stay in the west



of England (the Bristol company appeared also at Bath) she acted a wide range of parts, from Shakespeare to extravaganza. The training, in quantity and variety, which was afforded by the stock companies of the middle of the last century, cannot easily be matched to-day. The theatrical system of England and America has been revolutionized, and the long run, the country-wide tour, the specialized actor, have become the rule. Only within the last few years, as in the rise of the Irish national theatre, the Manchester Players, and the upward trend in certain American stock companies, can we see something of a return to earlier conditions.

There followed a year in London, in the company, headed by the older Sothern, which was playing at the Haymarket. She was but fifteen, yet the *Times* said: "She is now matured into one of the happiest specimens of what the French call the *ingénue*." She played Gertrude in *The Little Treasure*, Hero in *Much 'Ado about Nothing*, Lady Touchwood in *The Belle's Stratagem*, Julia in *The Rivals*, and also Mary Meredith in a revival of *Our American Cousin*, in which Sothern was his famous other self, Lord Dundreary;—not bad for fifteen!

At sixteen came one of those sudden and complete absences from the stage that have strangely marked the career of one born to act. She was married in 1864 to George Frederick Watts, the famous artist. He was thirty-one

years her senior. Watts was a man of great nobility of character, he cared for her deeply, and the brief period of her life with him she herself declared not wholly unhappy. Yet the marriage was a mistake. Though she responded to the beauty and peace of her new surroundings, and for a while at least was contented to forget the theatre, she was little more than a child—exuberant, unused to the restraint of a quiet country home; and she had tasted success. The artist himself was oppressed with a feeling that he had spoiled her life. In any event they soon separated, and she met him only once thereafter, though years later they exchanged friendly letters.

When she was nearing twenty Ellen Terry returned to the stage, more or less under the direction of Charles Reade, the famous novelist, then part manager of the Queen's. One of the best of English novelists of the second degree, his main artistic interest was the theatre, and he was, mistakenly, more ambitious of fame as a dramatist than as a novelist. His play *The Double Marriage* was founded on his novel *White Lies*. It was well acted (Ellen Terry playing the heroine), and well mounted, but a failure. Charles Reade's oft-quoted description of Ellen Terry in a way characterizes them both, the charming actress and the brusque, facile writer: "Her eyes are pale, her nose rather long, her mouth nothing particular, complexion a delicate brick-dust, her hair rather like tow. Yet somehow she is beautiful. Her

expression kills any pretty face you see beside her. Her figure is lean and bony; her hands masculine in size and form. Yet she is a pattern of fawn-like grace. Whether in movement or repose, grace pervades the hussy." The two were to be excellent, even affectionate, friends.

The most noteworthy event of this brief engagement at the Queen's was her first appearance with Henry Irving, then of course a rising actor, not yet the distinguished manager of later days. The play was Garrick's "mutilation" of *The Taming of the Shrew* which he called *Katherine and Petruchio*. Of this foreshadowing of what was to be, Miss Terry writes: "There is an old story told of Mr. Irving being 'struck with my talent at this time and promising that if he ever had a theatre of his own he'd give me an engagement!' But that is all moonshine. As a matter of fact I'm sure he never thought of me at all at that time. I was just then acting very badly, and feeling ill, caring scarcely at all for my work or a theatre, or anybody belonging to a theatre." And again: "From the first I noticed that Mr. Irving worked more concentratedly than all the other actors put together, and the most important lesson of my working life I learnt from him, that to do one's work well one must *work continually*, live a life of constant self-denial for that purpose, and, in short, keep one's nose upon the grindstone." Of her performance in the pseudo-Shake-

spearean piece the critics varied. "I have not much recollection of the performance," wrote Clement Scott, "save that Ellen Terry was the sweetest shrew ever seen and that it seemed barbaric to crack a whip in her presence."

After acting for about a year at the Queen's, Miss Terry again retired from the stage, this time for six years. She disappeared from London and the stage and wholeheartedly gave herself up to a tranquil domestic life in the country. This was the period of her union with Charles Wardell, her second husband, an excellent actor known to playgoers as Charles Kelly. Of this union there have been two children, Ailsa Craig, who played small parts at the Lyceum with her mother and Henry Irving, and Gordon Craig, who, first an actor, is today recognized as one of the most important and fertile workers toward a new art of stage setting.

"I led a most unconventional life," writes Miss Terry, "and experienced exquisite delight from the mere fact of being in the country. No one knows what 'the country' means until he or she has lived in it. 'Then, if ever, come perfect days.' . . . For the first time I was able to put all my energies into living. . . . I began gardening, 'the purest of human pleasures'; I learned to cook, and in time cooked very well, though my first essay in that difficult art was rewarded with dire and complete failure."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "It was a chicken! Now, as all the chickens had names—



“My hour of rising at this pleasant place near Mackery End in Hertfordshire was six. Then I washed the babies. I had a perfect mania for *washing* everything and everybody. We had one little servant, and I insisted on washing her head. Her mother came up from the village to protest. ‘Never washed her head in my life. Never washed any of my children’s heads.’

“After the washing I fed the animals. There were two hundred ducks and fowls to feed, as well as the children. By the time I had done this, and cooked the dinner, the morning had flown away. After the midday meal I sewed. Sometimes I drove out in the pony-cart. And in the evening I walked across the common to fetch the milk. The babies used to roam where they liked on this common in charge of a bull-dog, while I sat and read. I studied cookery-

Sultan, Duke, Lord Tom Noddy, Lady Teazle, and so forth—and as I was very proud of them as living birds, it was a great wrench to kill one at all, to start with. It was the murder of Sultan, not the killing of a chicken. However, at last it was done, and Sultan deprived of his feathers, floured, and trussed. I had no idea *how* this was all done, but I tried to make him ‘sit up’ nicely like the chickens in the shops.

“He came up to the table looking magnificent—almost turkey-like in his proportions.

“‘Hasn’t this chicken rather an odd smell?’ said our visitor.

“‘How can you!’ I answered. ‘It must be quite fresh—it’s Sultan!’

“However, when we began to carve, the smell grew more and more potent.

“*I had cooked Sultan without taking out his in’ards!*

“There was no dinner that day except bread-sauce, beautifully made, well-cooked vegetables, and pastry like the foam of the sea. I had a wonderful hand for pastry.”

books instead of parts—Mrs. Beeton instead of Shakespeare!

“Oh, blissful quiet days! How soon they came to an end! Already the shadow of financial trouble fell across my peace. Yet still I never thought of returning to the stage.

“One day I was driving in a narrow lane, when the wheel of the pony-cart came off. I was standing there, thinking what I should do next, when a whole crowd of horsemen in ‘pink’ came leaping over the hedge into the lane. One of them stopped and asked if he could do anything. Then he looked hard at me and exclaimed: ‘Good God! It’s Nelly!’ The man was Charles Reade.

“‘Where have you been all these years?’ he said.

“‘I have been having a very happy time,’ I answered.

“‘Well, you’ve had it long enough. Come back to the stage!’

“‘No, never!’

“‘You’re a fool! You ought to come back.’

“Suddenly I remembered the bailiff in the house a few miles away, and I said laughingly: ‘Well, perhaps I would think of it if someone would give me forty pounds a week!’

“‘Done!’ said Charles Reade. ‘I’ll give you that, and more, if you’ll come and play Philippa Chester in *The Wandering Heir*.’”

Thus it was “dear, lovable, aggravating, childlike, crafty, gentle, obstinate, and entirely

delightful and interesting Charles Reade," to use Ellen Terry's own characterization, who in 1874 induced her to return to the stage. He was then managing the Queen's. Since 1868 she had not acted at all, but she was well remembered, and her reappearance was cordially welcomed. The play was one of Reade's own, *The Wandering Heir*, and in course of it Miss Terry appeared in male attire—one of the few times she had what old timers used to know as "breeches parts." From all accounts it was a buoyant, charming impersonation. The author complimented her on her self-denial in making what he called "some sacrifice of beauty to pass for a boy, so that the audience can't say: 'Why, James must be a fool not to see she is a girl.'"

From this time, in 1874, until more than thirty years later, Ellen Terry was continuously before the public. In 1875, S. B. Bancroft (later Sir Squire)—one of the ablest actor-managers of the day—determined upon a daring experiment at his little Prince of Wales's Theatre, a bandbox of a theatre hitherto dedicated to the "teacup and saucer drama." This was his production of *The Merchant of Venice*. The play has never been set more beautifully, and as we shall see, it was in one part acted to perfection. But it failed through the failure of Charles Coghlan as Shylock. For Ellen Terry, however, it was really the first great triumph of her career. For her

Portia on this occasion was a real triumph. She was twenty-seven, in the very perfection of her youth and beauty, and it was her first important venture with a Shakespearean part. Her success was immediate, and Portia, in the minds of many, always remained her most charming and characteristic impersonation.<sup>7</sup> "Success I had had of a kind, and I had tasted the delight of knowing that audiences liked me, and had liked them back again! But never until I appeared as Portia at the Prince of Wales's had I experienced that awe-struck feeling which comes, I suppose, to no actress more than once in a lifetime—the feeling of the conqueror. In homely parlance, I knew that I had 'got them' at the moment when I spoke the speech beginning: 'You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand.' 'What can this be?' I thought. 'Quite this thing has never come to me before.' It was never to be quite the same again. Elation, triumph, being lifted on high by a single stroke of the mighty wing of glory—call it by any

<sup>7</sup> Of her first night as Portia the *London Daily News* said: "This is indeed the Portia that Shakespeare drew. The bold innocence, the lively wit and quick intelligence, the grace and elegance of manner, and all the youth and freshness of this exquisite creation can rarely have been depicted in such harmonious combination. Nor is this delightful actress less successful in indicating the tenderness and depth of passion which lie under that frolicsome exterior. Miss Terry's figure, at once graceful and commanding, and her singularly sweet and expressive countenance, doubtless aid her much; but this performance is essentially artistic, . . . in the style of art which cannot be taught."



name—it was as Portia that I had my first and last sense of it.”

In spite of Miss Terry's personal success, the Bancrofts' splendid revival of *The Merchant of Venice* was short lived. Its thirty-six performances served, however, to lay firmly the foundations of Ellen Terry's fame. Only three years were to elapse before she made her epoch-making association with Henry Irving. She spent first a year with the Bancrofts, helping them give life to a group of already old-fashioned dramas, *Money*, *The Lady of Lyons*, *Masks and Faces*, and *Ours*. “She enacted Clara Douglas and Pauline as well as they have been ever played in our time, and showed us that the staginess of the stagiest of old plays can be eliminated by acting so sincere and natural as that of Ellen Terry.”<sup>s</sup>

Then came, in John Hare's company at the Court Theatre, where the other members included her husband and Charles Coghlan (besides Mr. Hare himself), two years remarkable chiefly for *Olivia*. The success of Mr. Hare's venture was doubtful, when suddenly a happy idea came to him,—a play made from *The Vicar of Wakefield*. It was a time of enthusiasm for the eighteenth century. “We were all mad about blue china, Chippendale chairs, Sheraton sideboards, old spinets, and brass fire irons,” says one writer. “The age was exactly ripe for *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and John

<sup>s</sup> Clement Scott.

Hare, with his keen instinct, pictured in his mind's eye an ideal Olivia in Ellen Terry." W. G. Wills made the play, and made it well. Play, setting, and acting conspired to make *Olivia* one of the best examples of the "play of a period." As Olivia herself Ellen Terry was supremely successful and appealing. Among her non-Shakespearean characters it undoubtedly stands first, and for her sake *Olivia* was introduced into the Lyceum repertoire, and acted by Irving and Terry for many years.

It was her acting in this part, indeed, that immediately preceded and to a degree occasioned her becoming the chief support of Henry Irving, who just at this time (1878) became manager of the Lyceum Theatre. Irving's ambition to gather the best possible company made the choice natural, inevitable indeed. She had just turned thirty, she was temperamentally fitted to complement his own peculiarly magnetic personality, she was thoroughly accomplished, and she was already universally popular. It is a question, as says Clement Scott, "how much of Henry Irving's success was due at the outset to the extraordinary influence, charm, and fascination of Ellen Terry." They were one in their enthusiasm for their art, and they were alike in their artistic prejudices. Like Irving, she was devoted to the poetic and romantic drama, as opposed to the realistic, psychological drama of modern life.<sup>9</sup>

Henry Irving and Ellen Terry acted to-

<sup>9</sup> Ellen Terry dismisses Ibsen's women as "silly ladies,"

gether for twenty-four years. One is used to being told that the Irving *régime* at the Lyceum constituted the most brilliant period of the English stage during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Brilliant it certainly was—a splendidly successful, dignified campaign in fostering the best English stage traditions. Yet one cannot but sympathize with George Bernard Shaw's regret that Ellen Terry did not retire from Irving's company sooner than she did. "I have never made a secret of my opinion," wrote Shaw, "that the Lyceum undertaking, celebrated as it was, involved, when looked at from the purely dramatic side of the stage art, a most deplorable waste of two of the most remarkable talents of the end of the last century." What Mr. Shaw objected to was the exclusion from the Lyceum repertoire of modern, radical dramatists, such as Ibsen, Hauptmann, and doubtless Mr. Shaw himself. But while he thought that Irving used Shakespeare's plays not to interpret the dramatist's characters but as frames for figures which were creations of the actor's imagination, Mr. Shaw must needs say of Ellen Terry that "she understood Shakespeare, and knew how to impersonate Beatrice, Juliet, Imogen and the rest, intelligently, charmingly, exactly as they must have appeared to Shakespeare in his mind's eye." And it is probably true that Ellen Terry, devoted as she was to her "lovely art,"

"drawn in straight lines," and easy to play; a characteristic, if radically unjustified view.

as she called it, was not more than casually interested in the development of the allied art, that of the dramatist. She disliked Ibsen, and had no desire for his sake to desert the Lyceum. "Why did she remain so long?" asks Mr. Shaw, and replying to himself: "The answer is found in the fact that the Lyceum, while it did not call her dramatic faculties into full play, gave the widest scope for the full development of a wonderful sense of the picturesque." In other words, she was attracted by the romantic rather than the realistic, the poetic rather than the psychological.

We have traced the important steps of her rise to a high place in her profession. How might one account for the personal element in this success?—for, trained and accomplished artist as she was, personality counted heavily in this progress. Well, there has been, can be, but one Ellen Terry. In writing of her powerful charm the words of strong men have run riot. "I never saw a more enchanting and ideal creature," wrote Clement Scott of her later girlhood. "She was a poem that lived and breathed, and suggested to us the girl heroines that we most adored in poetry and the fine arts generally. Later on, as we all know, Ellen Terry played Queen Guinevere; but at this period she was 'Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable, Elaine the Lily Maid of Astolat.' . . . She was the Porphyria of Robert Browning and surely one of the crowned queens in the *Morte d'Arthur*. I wish I could paint with pen an



even vague suggestion of this enchanting personality, tall, fair, willowy, with hair like spun gold, a faultless complexion, the very poetry of movement, with that wonderful deep-toned voice that has a heart-throb in it." If in her 'teens Ellen Terry was "ideal, mystical, mediæval," and suggested Elaine and Undine, who that ever saw her, in her later career, as Olivia, but saw realized in flesh and blood the ideal of English beauty?

"The rôle which she played in the life of her times," says Mr. Shaw, "can only be properly estimated when (perhaps fifty years hence) her letters will be collected and published in twenty or thirty volumes.<sup>10</sup> Then, I think, we shall discover that every celebrated man of the last quarter of the nineteenth century had been in love with Ellen Terry, and that many of these men had found in her friendship the best return that could be expected from a gifted, brilliant and beautiful woman, whose love had already been given elsewhere." And not only celebrated men. There have been countless lowly, unknown devotees. "That much-used word 'only' can be used literally in regard to Ellen Terry," again says Mr. Shaw with unusual enthusiasm. "If Shakespeare had met Irving on the street he would have recognized in him immediately a distinguished type of the family of artists; if he had met

<sup>10</sup> "She has always been an indefatigable and charming letter-writer, one of the greatest letter writers that ever lived," says Mr. Shaw, the happy recipient of many of her letters.

Ellen Terry he would have stared at her as at a new and irresistibly charming type of woman."

It seems clear that Ellen Terry's success was after all one largely of personality. She was splendidly successful, and no one could for a moment deny the fascinating beauty of most of her acting. Yet was she of the first flight of artists? It is difficult to answer *Yes*. Her Portia and her Beatrice were the finest of her time, probably the finest the stage has yet seen; her Olivia was a lovely, indeed a perfect, realization of Goldsmith's heroine, and in many another character she charmed and moved her hearers. Yet when all is said and done Ellen Terry, in her most successful parts, was simply her glorified self. It is probably true—though the question was never thoroughly put to the test—that she lacked that power, reserved for the artist of first rank, of identifying herself equally well with widely differing characters. True tragedy lay beyond her. Charles Reade, at one time a constant and helpful critic of her acting, told her that she was capable of any effect, *provided it was not sustained too long*. "A truer word was never spoken," says Miss Terry. "It has never been in my power to sustain. In private life, I cannot sustain a hatred or a resentment. On the stage, I can pass swiftly from one effect to another, but I cannot fix one, and dwell on it, with that superb concentration which seems to me the special attribute of the tragic actress. To sustain,

with me, is to lose the impression that I have created, not to increase its intensity." Always of a volatile, light-hearted temperament in her own self, the acting of tragedy was with her more a matter of routine duty than the natural response of her nature.

But let us not seem to require too much of a providence that vouchsafes so rarely an Ellen Terry. If criticism, when the final estimate is written, is forced to recognize in her a circumscribed talent, we who have seen her would not have had her otherwise than as she was. And if one says she was not truly a great artist, another may reply truthfully that with her art was second, life itself first. "In contrast to Irving, to whom his art was everything and his life nothing, she has found life itself more interesting than art," says George Bernard Shaw. "And while she was associated with him in his long and brilliant management of the Lyceum Theatre she—the most modern of modern women—considered it a higher honor to be an economic, exemplary housewife than to be a self-conscious woman, whose highest aim was to play the heroine in the old-fashioned plays in which Irving shone." Again, she lacked that all-sacrificing ambition that carries the artist to the topmost heights. During her two absences from the stage, and especially during the second, when she spent six years in the country, happy as housewife and mother, she had no regrets for the stage, no longing for its triumphs. And she was throughout her

career content to be a "useful" actress. She constantly uses that word. She was content, first with private life, then with her ability to help the artistic cause of Henry Irving.

Never has there been a better example than Ellen Terry of the blending of trained acting ability with untamed high spirits. Her acting was sure of its effects and yet shot through with gleams of her own radiant charm and exuberance. And off the stage as well she was this same blithe spirit. It was strange that she disliked the elder Sothorn, for if he had his equal in practical joking, it was in Ellen Terry. She was thirty when she joined Irving. Yet one day when he came to the foot of the stairs leading to her dressing room, he looked up to see his new leading woman sliding down the banisters! The act was characteristic, and so is her comment: "I remember feeling as if I had laughed in church. . . . He smiled at me but didn't seem able to get over it." But sunny as she was, she could weep too. When playing Olivia, she generally wept, she says, for the part touched her more than any other. "I cried too much in it, just as I cried too much later on in *Hamlet*, and in the last act of *Charles I.* My real tears on the stage have astonished some people, and have been the envy of others, but they have often been a hindrance to me. I have had to *work* to restrain them." She was occasionally oversensitive to adverse criticism. When a writer in *Blackwood's* said she showed plainly that



Portia loves Bassanio before he has actually won her, Miss Terry was, she says, for years made uneasy and lacking in sureness at this moment in the play. "Any suggestion of indelicacy in my treatment of a part," she wrote, "always blighted me."

To trace in detail the history of "Irving and Terry" would be tedious. They acted together from 1878 to 1902. Their half dozen American tours aroused the same enthusiasm and loyalty that during all that long period was their portion at home.<sup>11</sup> Her retirement is so recent that the actress's Portia, her Beatrice, Juliet, Imogen, Ophelia (to mention only the outstanding Shakespearean characters) are still fresh memories.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On one of her last American tours Miss Terry attended in New York the first night of a young playwright's new work, and at the end of the third act he was presented to her. She congratulated him warmly: "It is very good," she said, "your play is very good indeed, and I shall send all my American friends to see it."

"In that case," said the playwright, with a very low and courtly bow, "my little piece will sell ninety million tickets."

<sup>12</sup> The dates of her most important impersonations since joining Henry Irving: Ophelia in *Hamlet*, 1878; Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*; Ruth Meadows in *The Fate of Eugene Aram*, Queen Henrietta Maria in *Charles I*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, 1879; Iolanthe in *King René's Daughter*, Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*, 1880; Camma in *The Cup*, Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem*, Desdemona in *Othello*, 1881; Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Beatrice at the Lyceum (her previous appearance had been at Leeds), 1882; Viola in *Twelfth Night*, 1884; Olivia in *Olivia* (revival), Margaret in *Faust*, 1885; Ellaline in *The Amber Heart*, 1887; Lady Macbeth, in *Macbeth*, 1888; Catherine Duval in *The Dead Heart*, 1889; Lucy Ashton in *Ravenswood*, 1890; Queen Katherine in *Henry VIII*, Cordelia in *King Lear*, 1892; Rosa-

It is probably true, as Mr. Shaw maintains,<sup>13</sup> that despite the opportunities given her to act Shakespeare's most charming heroines, Miss Terry's association with Henry Irving really resulted in reducing her total accomplishment. Irving sacrificed her as he did himself and everyone and everything else, to his art. To be sure he mounted a number of plays—notably *Olivia*, *The Lady of Lyons*, *Faust*, *Madame Sans-Gêne*, and perhaps some of the Shakespearean comedies—primarily for her sake. Yet she little better than wasted much time and effort in playing secondary and unsuccessful parts in plays selected primarily for him. And, sorrow of sorrows, *Rosalind*, whom she was born to play, he never made possible for her. How incomparable she would have been!—a *Rosalind* of ideal aspect, of delicious high spirits, of consummate grace and tenderness.<sup>14</sup>

mund in *Becket*, Nance Oldfield in *Nance Oldfield*, 1893; Queen Guinevere in *King Arthur*, 1895; Imogen in *Cymbeline*, 1896; Madame Sans-Gêne in the play of that name, 1897; Clarisse in *Robespierre*, 1899; Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, 1901; she acted under Irving's management for the last time in 1902, playing Portia at his final performance at the Lyceum; Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1903; *Alice-Sit-By-The-Fire*, 1905; Lady Cecily Waynflete in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, 1906. On April 28, 1906, the fiftieth anniversary of her first appearance, she played Francisca in *Measure for Measure* (once only) at the Adelphi.

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Shaw's article on Ellen Terry appeared, in German, in the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna. And there are several striking passages concerning her in the *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*.

<sup>14</sup> Yet, characteristically, she was better satisfied than some of her admirers: "I have sometimes wondered," she wrote,

But it seems, after all, rather futile and ungrateful, in the face of what has really been, to cavil about what might have been. Ellen Terry has actually been one of those rare spirits who confer a blessing on a gray world by their mere presence. As a woman she was lovable, simple, whole-heartedly human, generous, high spirited; as an actress, uniquely delightful and in many impersonations, by virtue of nature and instinct, of compelling power, even genius. Small wonder that we must reckon her as one of the great line of English women of the theatre, the last indeed of that small and scattered band, who, each in turn, were the queens of the stage; small wonder, too, that by thousands of hearts on both sides of the ocean she has been cherished as an idealized fellow creature.

When she had at last left Sir Henry she bade fair to enlarge the scope of her already well-rounded career by appearing in plays of a more modern type than any that fell within the Lyceum's scope. "When her son, Mr. Gordon Craig, became a father," wrote George Bernard Shaw, "she said that no one would ever write plays for a grandmother. I immediately wrote *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*

"what I should have accomplished without Henry Irving. I might have had 'bigger' parts but it doesn't follow that they would have been better ones, and if they had been written by contemporary dramatists my success would have been less durable. 'No actor or actress who doesn't play in the classics—in Shakespeare or old comedy—will be heard of long,' was one of Henry Irving's statements, and he was right."

to prove the contrary. Once before I had tried to win her when I wrote *The Man of Destiny* in which the heroine is simply a delineation of Ellen Terry, imperfect, it is true, for who can describe the indescribable?"<sup>15</sup>

When in 1905 Miss Terry played James M. Barrie's delightful *Alice-Sit-By-The-Fire*, it was felt, by those minded like Mr. Shaw, and not disturbed by seeing her appear in a play widely diverging from the Lyceum traditions, that at last she had come into her own—that she was doing what she should have done years before, in giving her talents to a modern play. And the next year she appeared as Lady Cecily in the play that Shaw had written for a grandmother, and that had waited for her seven years, *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*.

She had been an actress fifty years. When the anniversary approached the English world of the theatre bestirred itself to mark the date fittingly. The celebration took the form of an astonishing entertainment at Drury Lane. The programme ranged from songs, recitations, *tableaux vivants*, through *Trial by Jury* and scenes from *The School for Scandal*, to an act from *Much Ado*, in which Miss Terry herself was Beatrice, supported by a cast including a score of the Terry family. The list of those who appeared on the stage of Drury Lane on the afternoon of June 12, 1906, is simply a ros-

<sup>15</sup> Ellen Terry never played *The Man of Destiny*. Irving accepted it and shelved it.



ter of the pick of the actor's profession in England; distinguished actors, if nothing more could be found for them to do, thought themselves honored to walk on as supernumeraries; Genée danced; Caruso sang; Signora Duse came all the way from Florence to pay homage; the audience, which had begun to gather for the great occasion as early as the previous day,<sup>16</sup> was overwhelming in its enthusiasm, and altogether the occasion was an unprecedented demonstration of loyalty and affection.

Early in the following year (1907) Miss Terry made her eighth and as an actress her last tour of the United States.<sup>17</sup> Three years later, and again in 1914, she came as a lecturer reading scenes from Shakespeare and commenting on his heroines. It was good to see and hear her again if only on the platform, even though, as William Winter said, it is one thing to act, another to expound.

<sup>16</sup> The first to appear was an elderly woman who long before noon on Monday placed herself and her campstool outside the entrance to the theatre. The performance was not scheduled to begin until the next day at half past one. During Monday afternoon and evening the gathering outside the doors steadily increased in size, until, at midnight there were many hundreds. Miss Terry, late Monday night, appeared to greet the waiting enthusiasts, and Mr. Arthur Collins, the manager of Drury Lane, furnished them a supper of hot coffee, rolls and cake. When the doors were at last opened many of those who had thus patiently waited failed to find room within the theatre. The proceeds of this entertainment, together with those of a popular subscription in England and America, went to Miss Terry and amounted to about forty thousand dollars.

<sup>17</sup> It was during this tour that Miss Terry made her third marriage, to James Carew, an actor of her company. Charles Wardell (Charles Kelly) died in 1885.

"To see her as an actress was to see a vital creature of beauty, passion, tenderness, and eloquence, a being, in Cleopatra's fine phrase, all 'fire and air.'" On the lecture platform she was not quite all that, but she was still Ellen Terry, imperial of figure, rich of voice, buoyant of mood.<sup>18</sup> As such her public in England and America saw its last of her.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> During this tour the honor and affection she had won in the minds of Americans were attested by various testimonials. She was given at a special ceremony the Founder's Medal of the now extinct New Theatre in New York, a "farewell banquet" was tendered her there, and in both New York and Boston she received an elaborate "book of welcome," signed by many notable people and accompanied by poetic addresses, composed in one case by Percy MacKaye and in the other by Josephine Preston Peabody.

<sup>19</sup> In January, 1914, she appeared at King's Hall, London, as the Abbess in two performances of *Paphnutius*, a play written in the tenth century by Hroswitha, a Benedictine nun. It was on this old play that Anatole France founded his romance *Thaïs*. Thus did Ellen Terry, at nearly three score and ten, continue to furnish proof of her still youthful spirit and readiness for work. Later in the year she went to Australia to give there her Shakspearean lecture-readings. The great European war broke out, and conditions in Australia became so unfavorable that Miss Terry sailed for the United States, where she again lectured in a few of the larger cities.

For some years she had had increasing trouble with her eyes. Frequently she would spend the periods between the scenes in a darkened room. On February 23, 1914, in New York, Miss Terry underwent an operation, which proved successful, for the removal of a cataract from her right eye. In June, 1915, she reappeared in London on the occasion of a matinee given at the Haymarket in aid of one of the war charities. The play—a ballet pantomime called *The Princess and the Pea*—was the first musical piece in which Miss Terry ever took part. On this occasion also her two grandchildren made their stage *début*.

She is now living quietly in one of those small country houses the "collection" of which has been one of her hobbies. She has given in generous measure pleasure to many, many thousands;—more than pleasure, inspiration indeed, to countless men and women. The realization of this must be a great reward, to make happy the twilight of her life.

## GABRIELLE RÉJANE

A CERTAIN Frenchman once voiced the feeling of his fellow Parisians concerning Réjane by calling upon all good French provincials, who would learn the language of the Boulevards in a single lesson, and all children of other lands curious as to the pleasures, tastes, and manners of Paris, to harken while he gave them this advice: "Go and see Réjane. Don't go to the *Opéra*, where the music is German; nor to the *Opéra-Comique*, where it is Italian; nor yet to the *Comédie-Française*, where the sublime is made ridiculous, and the heroes and heroines of Racine take on the attitudes of bull-fighters and cigarette-makers; nor to the *Odéon*, nor to the *Palais-Royal*, nor here, nor there, nor elsewhere: go and see Réjane. Be she at London, Chicago, Brussels, St. Petersburg—Réjane is Paris. She carries the soul of Paris with her, wheresoever she listeth."

Madame Réjane—the Parisienne: they are interchangeable terms. And what is a Parisienne? Let our sprightly French friend—M. Dauphin Meunier—tell us; he does it well:<sup>1</sup>

"A fabulous being, in an everyday human form; a face, not beautiful, scarcely even pretty,

<sup>1</sup> In "The Yellow Book," Vol. II (1894).





GABRIELLE RÉJANE



which looks upon the world with an air at once ironical and sympathetic; a brow that grows broader or narrower according to the capricious invasions of her aureole of hair; an odd little nose, perked heavenward; two roguish eyes, now blue, now black; the rude accents of a street-girl, suddenly changing to the well-bred murmuring of a great lady; abrupt, abundant gestures, eloquently finishing half-spoken sentences; a supple neck—a slender, opulent figure—a dainty foot, that scarcely touches the earth and yet can fly amazingly near the ceiling; lips, nervous, sensuous, trembling, curling; a frock, simple or sumptuous, bought at a bargain or created by a Court-dressmaker; a gay, a grave demeanor; grace, wit, sweetness, tartness; frivolity and earnestness, tenderness and indifference: such is Woman at Paris: such is the Parisienne.

“No need for her to learn good manners, nor bad ones: she’s born with both. According to the time or place, she will talk to you of politics, of art, of literature—of dress, trade, cookery—of finance, of socialism, of luxury, of starvation—with the patness, the sure touch, the absolute sincerity, of one who has seen all, experienced all, understood all. She is as sentimental as a song, wily as a diplomat, gay as folly, or serious as a novel by Zola. What has she read? Where was she educated? Who cares? Her book of life is Paris; she knows her Paris by heart; and whoso knows Paris can dispense with further knowledge.”

Réjane was from the beginning a veritable child of Paris. She was born on June 6, 1857, at 14 *Rue de la Duane*, in a business section of the city. This street had been "one of the storm centers for almost every great riot known to the Paris of the last century and a half." The little Gabrielle Charlotte Réju passed her infancy in that busy part of Paris between *Porte Saint-Martin* and *Place Château d'Eau*.

Her parents were poor. Her father had earlier been an actor and at one time had directed a theatre at Arras.<sup>2</sup> When Gabrielle was born, and during the years of her infancy, he was the ticket-taker and the keeper of the buffet at the *Ambigu*. In the work of dispensing refreshments Madame Réju, who came of a good Valenciennes family, actively assisted, and even Gabrielle herself, when she grew old enough, was pressed into service.<sup>3</sup>

With the home life virtually transferred to the lobbies of the *Ambigu*, it was inevitable that Gabrielle, breathing the mystery-filled atmosphere of a theatre, should at once feel its strong influence. Like Ellen Terry and Mrs. Fiske, and unlike her compatriot the great Sarah, Réjane was, from the beginning, of the theatre. She was an amiably mischievous child, possessed of an immense curiosity about life behind the

<sup>2</sup> Further precedent for Gabrielle's career was furnished by her aunt, Mme. Naptal-Arnault, at one time a *pensionnaire* of the *Comédie-Française*.

<sup>3</sup> For much of the information in the early part of this chapter the author is indebted to *Loges et Coulisses*, by Jules Huret.



scenes. She remembers vividly those early days, in which she divided her time between her small duties, napping in corners, and revelling in the delights that presented themselves over the footlights. There she saw many of the stars of the day, Jane Essler, Frédérick Lemaître, Marie Laurent, Adèle Page. On the night of a new production, between the acts, she would go to her mother and recount the story of the play and give childish imitations of the various players. To imitate the fine gowns she saw on the stage, she would make a train from the buffet napkins. One of the memories of her childhood is the enchantment that possessed her when she saw herself, dressed in a velvet robe and a royal diadem, reflected in Adèle Page's splendid cheval glass.

When Gabrielle was about five, her father died, and mother and daughter were thrown on their own resources. Mme. Réju secured a position at one of the other theatres, and Gabrielle went to school. She was to some extent in the care of a friend, but she was privileged with extraordinary liberties. Her mother gave her a franc each morning with which to buy her evening meal, and it was with immense pride that she would go forth alone to take her dinner at a restaurant. Often she would save enough from her franc to buy an orange which she would take with her into the balcony of the *Ambigu*, where she was still privileged to go. There she would tarry to see an act of the play before she went home.

It is clear that she was a precocious, clever child. She was already, indeed, an actress. Her evening walk would invariably take her past her beloved *Ambigu*. She made an event of this passage, putting on her best attitudes and smiles for the artists who might be seated in the terrace of the café.

This café of the *Ambigu* was the scene of one of the oft-repeated episodes of Réjane's childhood. The proprietor, a relative of some sort, was in the habit of beating his wife. One evening, Gabrielle, who knew what to expect, happened—as was not unusual—to be in the café. Soon the poor woman's cries were heard as her lord and master belabored her. A patron demanded of Gabrielle what the terrible noises meant. "Oh, that, Monsieur," she said. "Why, they're rehearsing upstairs."

Soon the mother changed her work, and took up the painting of fans. Between sessions of the school, and all day on Thursdays, little Gabrielle helped in this work and proved herself adept. They received for this work about fifty cents per dozen fans. Madame Réju seems to have been sensitive as to her new work. She and her young daughter, too proud to have it known that they were doing work of that sort, or perhaps for fear of offending certain rich relatives, took a neighbor into their confidence and paid her for delivering the fans to *la maison Meyer*.

If mother and daughter had continued to live in the immediate neighborhood of the *Ambigu* it is not unlikely that the already lively ambition

of the girl would have found its outlet at that theatre. We have seen something of her enthusiasm for the *Ambigu* and her close relationship with its entourage. Once launched upon her career there as an actress of popular drama, she would very likely have remained there and missed the valuable training that she was to receive at the *Conservatoire*. As it happened, however, when she was about ten her mother moved from *Rue de Lancry* to 17 *Rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette*, and in large measure the influence of the *Ambigu* was removed.

On the same floor with Madame Réju and her daughter in their new quarters lived a lady with whom they gradually formed a close friendship. When the war of 1870 broke out, the new friend left Paris, leaving her apartment in charge of Mme. Réju and Gabrielle. There the windows, unlike those of Mme. Réju's own suite, overlooked the street. When the Commune brought the terrors of civil war to Paris, it was from these windows that the child witnessed what was to her a terrible and long-remembered sight, a street battle between the government troops and the Communists. The bodies of slain men, carried past under those windows, gave her her first glimpse of death.

The war past, Gabrielle, now fourteen, returned to school at the *Pension Boulet, Rue Pigalle*. She applied herself diligently to her somewhat neglected studies, and to such good purpose that the mistress of the school, with whom Gabrielle had become a favorite, offered

her a position as an assistant with the younger pupils. She was to be paid forty francs a month, and her luncheon. To her mother this seemed to be the opening of an honorable career. Not so Gabrielle herself, who cherished constantly her already fixed ambition to be an actress. She was, however, fond of children, and to tide affairs over she took a class of the younger pupils. She got along well enough with them with their ordinary lessons, but her own instruction in sewing and embroidery had been neglected, and she had to have the help of the older of her pupils, to bridge the gap.

Occasionally, of a Sunday evening, Gabrielle was taken by her mother to the house of a friend who gathered about herself a modest *salon*. There came such men as Félicien David, the composer, Joseph Kelm, the writer, and the architect, Frantz Jourdain. Gabrielle, young as she was, with her natural gayety and spontaneity at once took her place in the circle. She would sing for the assembly the popular songs of the day—compositions often full of doubtful meanings that she very imperfectly understood. Her little successes naturally strengthened her longing to be an actress, to stir great houses as she amused this little circle of friends.

To Gabrielle's increasing ambition her mother set herself in opposition. To her mind the forty francs per month was not lightly to be sacrificed. And she said she did not care to be the mother of an actress. She lived to own herself in the wrong.



One evening, as mother and daughter were passing the *Théâtre Français*, they saw a crowd at the stage door. They questioned a bystander and were told that this had been the farewell performance of Regnier. Gabrielle insisted on waiting to see him come out. She had never seen him, but every one knew of Regnier, great artist and lovable personality. Soon he appeared, a little, old man, who got up into his carriage and acknowledged the ovation with a modest and confused air. Gabrielle never forgot her first and touching glimpse of the man to whom she was soon to owe so much.

The struggle with her mother over her cherished plan to go on the stage went on for another year. A Mlle. Angelo, a friend of Mme. Réju, attempted to make peace by offering Gabrielle a *dot* of 10,000 francs if she would accept a plan to marry as a solution of the difficulty. But Gabrielle refused to be bought off, and steadfastly clung to her ambition, with the result that the mother at last gave in.

The friend from whose windows Gabrielle had seen the battling Communists had returned to Paris and now took up the girl's cause. She introduced Gabrielle to Charles Simon,<sup>4</sup> who knew well the actor Regnier, now an honored teacher at the *Conservatoire*. The girl was duly introduced to Regnier, who received her affably but tried to dissuade her from attempting the career of an actress. He was unable to overcome the

<sup>4</sup> Who, twenty-eight years later, with Pierre Berton, was to write for her *Zaza*, one of her most successful plays.

ardent resolution of Gabrielle, and finally consented to receive her, for two months, on the condition that if at the end of the time she failed to convince him of her calling she would promise to give up the attempt for good and all. Sure of success, she promised.

Regnier's first task was to cure his pupil of a thickness of diction. For hours every day she practiced enunciation, but found her master hard to please. Nevertheless he must have seen promise in her, for during the summer (of 1872) he wrote to Charles Simon that when classes assembled he would receive Gabrielle as a regularly enrolled pupil. When the *Conservatoire* reopened, she passed her entrance examination by reading the rôle of Henriette in *Les Femmes Savantes*, and was admitted. Here began, when she was fifteen, the serious work of her career.

She was an ardent pupil. Not content with the regular course, she and her mother squeezed their narrow means that the girl might amplify her studies with a number of private lessons with Regnier at his house. He gave her the lessons, but when she offered to pay, he refused to accept. "One does not accept pay," he said, "when he is privileged to deal with the temperament of an artist." And, thus, the trial months past, Regnier, instead of sending Gabrielle packing, engaged himself to teach her as best he could, gratis, till her period as a student should end.

In January (1873), came the annual elimina-

tion examination. Gabrielle, like the rest, submitted to the test that weeded out the less promising pupils. She had a rôle—that of Agnes—not altogether suited to her, her dress was not too well chosen, she was at the most awkward of ages, and she was by no means the prettiest girl of the lot. Gazing at her, Edward Thierry, director of the *Comédie Française*, said in a doubtful tone to Regnier, “Do we keep *this*?” “Yes,” promptly replied Regnier, “she is in my class and she stays.” At the end of the school year came the annual competition. For her part in the preliminary examination Regnier chose *L’Intrigue Épistolaire*. Thierry, again one of the judges, failed to recognize her and said, “This child is charming! She is the hope of the competition.” And, imitating his colleague’s former doubting tone, Regnier now said, “We keep *this*, then?”

In the competition itself Gabrielle, in this same scene of *L’Intrigue Épistolaire*, fell just short of a prize and received a *premier accessit*, or honorable mention,—not bad for a girl just turned sixteen and a mere beginner.<sup>5</sup>

In this competition Mlle. Legault won the first prize in comedy and with it a post at the *Comédie Française*. Her departure left vacant

<sup>5</sup> Mme. Réjane recalls that her costume on this occasion was the object of much solicitude on the part of Regnier. On the day of the contest he came to her house at nine in the morning to pass judgment on her dress, which was made of white tarlatan at nine *sous* per metre, and cost in all about ten francs. Mme. Regnier loaned gloves for the occasion.

a scholarship of 1,200 francs. In the same competition her successor to the scholarship was to be determined. Regnier had resolved to get the scholarship, if possible, for Gabrielle. The professors who sat in judgment were forbidden by a rule of the *Conservatoire* to impart personally any news of the outcome. Such information was to come only from the administration. Regnier, however, conspired with his favorite pupil to relieve her of suspense. If she were the successful candidate for the scholarship he was to rub his nose as he left the building. After the meeting, therefore, she stood anxiously in the *porte-cochère*, awaiting her teacher and the behavior of his index finger. Imagine the importance of the moment to the rather shabbily dressed, not too well-fed, nervously anxious girl. To stay her hunger as she waited she was eating bits from a long loaf tucked under her arm. First came M. Legouvé, who, by a curious chance, rubbed his nose briskly as he left the building. Then came MM. Beauplan and Ambroise Thomas, and each, oddly enough, suddenly gave his nose a vigorous rub. Gabrielle wondered, but could not believe that all these demonstrations were for her. Finally, out came Regnier, smiling, and slowly rubbing his nose with the end of his forefinger. For the moment the loaf of bread had been forgotten. Now she waved it aloft, dancing about in an ecstasy of joy.

The winning of the scholarship made it possible for Gabrielle to go on with her studies in



the two months' interval that preceded the re-opening of the *Conservatoire*.

Francisque Sarcey was discerning enough to note the promise in this sixteen year old girl. He said of her, in speaking to the playwright Meilhac: "She has a face you would know as Parisian a mile off . . . and she is full of the devil. If this girl doesn't make her way, I shall be much surprised. . . . She is charming; she is piquant; and if I were a manager I would engage her out of hand."

To eke out the family income, Gabrielle had two pupils, youngster though she was. They were young girls from Gascony, and it was her task to cure them of their un-Parisian accent. She remembers that one day when she was on her way to her pupils, the omnibus passed a church. The crowd about the door, and the numerous flowers, denoted a funeral. "They are burying Desclée,"<sup>6</sup> said a fellow passenger. Gabrielle had seen Desclée in some of her notable successes:—*Froufrou*, *La Femme de Claude*, *La Princesse Georges*—and had been stirred to renewed ambition by her art. So now she was tempted to alight and pay her respects to the dead actress' memory; but she remembered her lesson, and went on to her pupils.

Her last year (1873-4) at the *Conservatoire* Mme. Réjane remembers not only for its months

<sup>6</sup> Aimée Olympe Desclée (1836-1874), of the *Gymnase*, who excelled in modern French emotional plays. She acted with success in London, and also appeared in Belgium and Russia.

of hard study but for an incident or two that, trivial in themselves, had considerable importance in her youthfully ambitious mind. One morning Regnier called on her to recite "*La Fille d'Honneur*," a poem she had memorized by hearing it often spoken by a fellow pupil. She was horribly nervous. Her own two pupils were present, as *auditrices*, and Gabrielle feared the usual frequent interruption of Regnier, who as a rule made his pupils repeatedly go back over imperfectly recited passages. This time, however, he allowed her to proceed to the end, which agitated her still more, and then he said in a solemn tone as if pronouncing a final judgment on her: "*C'est très bien, ma petite; descends, tu seras une grande artiste.*" Réjane says that the intense joy of that instant never was equaled afterwards, even in the moments of her greatest triumphs.

The pupils of the *Conservatoire* were permitted to accept engagements to play on Sundays at the little theatre of the *Tour-d'Auvergne*. There it was that Gabrielle made her first public appearance. The play was *Les Deux Timides*, and in acting it she had the inexperienced assistance of Albert Carré. In the middle of the piece M. Carré was seated at a desk, writing a letter, when his nose began to bleed. He bolted from the stage, leaving the *débutante* alone to face her first audience in the midst of a staggering contretemps. Advice was hoarsely whispered from the wings to do this or that, to walk off, to sit down, to wait for Carré; Ga-

brielle coolly seated herself and took up the writing of the letter until, a moment later, the bleeding stopped, Carré returned.<sup>7</sup>

When the concours of 1874 arrived—the annual prize contest of the *Conservatoire*—Gabrielle's progress had been such that her fellow-students and her professor all thought her sure of the first prize in comedy. Regnier chose for her one of Roxelane's scenes in *Les Trois Sultanes*. When she had finished she felt that she had done herself scant justice. Then the unexpected happened. She was also to appear in a dialogue called *La Jeunesse*, by Emile Augier. A youthful couple met at a fountain. The young man says: "Cyprienne!" She exclaims: "Ah! Mon Dieu!" Gabrielle delivered this commonplace speech with such a sincerity and intensity of emotion that the audience broke into applause. Reassured, she played the dialogue through to the end with a command of emotional acting that surprised even her friends, for she had been thought of as only a *comédienne*, a soubrette.

When the prizes were announced, Gabrielle found that she had not only missed getting the first comedy prize, but that she was to get only a share of the second; the other half was to go

<sup>7</sup> The students played also in the suburbs, at Versailles, Mantes, and Chartres. It was at Chartres, where she had a part in *Les Paysans Lorrains*, that the playbills first named her Réjane. Till now she had gone by her own name of Réju. She played also, while still a student, at *matinées-conférences* at the *Porte-Saint-Martin*, in *Le Dépit Amoureux* and *Les Ménechmes*.

to Mlle. Jeanne Samary, she "of the perfect laugh."

Regnier was chagrined. "*Malfaiteurs*," he called the judges. And some of the newspaper comment showed a recognition of unusual merit in the young Réjane. Sarcey, the reigning king of the Paris critics, had again been present, and *Le Temps* rang with his praises of her. And his praises were perhaps better than official prizes. A score of years later, M. Meunier wrote:

"To-day, as then, though twenty years have passed, there is no possibility of success, no chance of getting an engagement, for a pupil on leaving the *Conservatoire*, unless a certain all-powerful critic, supreme judge, arbiter beyond appeal, sees fit to pronounce a decision confirming the verdict of the Examining Jury. . . . He smiles or frowns, the Jury bows its head. The pupils tremble before this monstrous Fetic— for the Public thinks with him, and sees only through his spectacles; and no star can shine till his short sight has discovered it. This puissant astronomer is Monsieur Francisque Sarcey. . . .

"Monsieur Sarcey smiled upon and applauded Réjane's debut at the *Conservatoire*. He consecrated to her as many as fifty lines of intelligent criticism; and I pray to Heaven they may be remembered to his credit on the Day of Judgment. Here they are, in that two-penny, half-penny style of his, so dear to the readers of *Le Temps*:



“ ‘I own that, for my part, I should have willingly awarded to the latter (Mlle. Réjane) a first prize. It seems to me that she deserved it. But the Jury is frequently influenced by extrinsic and private motives, into which it is not permitted to pry. A first prize carries with it the right of entrance into the *Comédie Française*; and the Jury did not think Mademoiselle Réjane, with her little wide-awake face, suited to the vast frame of the House of Molière. That is well enough; but the second prize which it awarded her authorized the director of the *Odéon* to receive her into his company; and that perspective alone ought to have sufficed to dissuade the Jury from the course it took. . . . Every one knows that at present the *Odéon* is, for a beginner, a most indifferent school. . . . Instead of shoving its promising pupils into it by the shoulders, the *Conservatoire* should forbid them to approach it, lest they should be lost there. What will Mademoiselle Réjane do at the *Odéon*? Show her legs in *La Jeunesse de Louis XIV*, which is to be revived at the opening of the season? A pretty state of things. She must either go to the *Vaudeville* or to the *Gymnase*. It is there that she will form herself; it is there that she will learn her trade, show what she is capable of, and prepare herself for the *Comédie Française*, if she is ever to enter it. . . . She recited a fragment from *Les Trois Sultanes*. . . . I was delighted by her choice. *Les Trois Sultanes* is so little known nowadays. . . . What wit there is in her look,

her smile! With her small eyes, shrewd and piercing, with her little face thrust forward, she has so knowing an air, one is inclined to smile at the mere sight of her. Does she perhaps show a little too much assurance? What of it? 'Tis the result of excessive timidity. But she laughs with such good grace, she has so fresh and true a voice, she articulates so clearly, she seems so happy to be alone and to have talent, that involuntarily one thinks of *Chenier's* line: "*Sa bienvenue au jour lui rit dans tous les yeux.*" . . . I shall be surprised if she does not make her way.' "

Second prize or first, it mattered not, really; for she had, almost at once, offers from three theatres: the *Odéon*, the government theatre that by the conditions of the award had a right to her services, and also from the *Vaudeville* and the *Gymnase*. *M. Duquesnel* of the *Odéon* proposed, as *Sarcey* had predicted, that she take a part in the impending *La Jeunesse de Louis XIV.* *Réjane*, however, declined to cut short her studies at the *Conservatoire*, which had yet a few weeks to run.

Her choice fell to the *Vaudeville*, as the theatre best suiting her methods and sympathies. Also, the pay there was to be four thousand francs per year, and costumes, as against one hundred and fifty francs per month at the *Odéon*. With the directors of the *Vaudeville* she signed a provisional contract, by the terms of which she was to join their forces if the *Odéon* did not press home its claim to her.

Weeks passed, the October openings came round, and still there was no summons. In her anxiety she went to the office of the Minister of Fine Arts and from him obtained a letter releasing her, in two days' time, from her obligations to the *Odéon*. Before the two days were up, however, she received from Duquesnel a summons to a rehearsal of *La Jeunesse*. Réjane hastened to see him. "Well," he said, "we shall rehearse to-morrow at one." Réjane replied that she had one at the *Vaudeville* at the same hour. Duquesnel objected to the loss of his promising recruit and showed an official letter bestowing her services upon the *Odéon*. Gabrielle in turn showed the letter from the Minister. Duquesnel was forced to yield, but afterwards lodged a suit in which the *Odéon* was awarded damages. "So," said Réjane to Jules Huret, "if the *Odéon* can to-day boast its velvet chairs, it has me to thank for them."

And so Réjane began her career, when she was less than eighteen, with a two years' engagement at the *Vaudeville*. Her first few rôles<sup>8</sup> were unimportant, and in them she at-

<sup>8</sup> Her first appearance at the *Vaudeville* was on March 25, 1875. Her first three parts were small rôles in *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*, *Fanny Lear*, and *Vaudeville's Hotel*. There followed: *Madame Lili*, *Midi à Quatorze Heures*, *Renaudin de Caen*, *La Corde*, 1875; *Le Verglas*, *Le Premier Tapis*, *Les Dominos Roses*, *Perfide comme L'Onde*, *Le Passe*, 1876; *Pierre*, *Les Vivacités du Capitaine Tic*, *Le Club*, 1877; *Le Mari d'Ida*, 1878; *Les Mémoires du Diable*, *Les Faux Bonshommes*, *Les Tapageurs*, *Les Lionnes Pauvres*, 1879; *La Vie de Bohème*, *Le Père Prodigue*, 1880; *La Petite Sœur*, *Odette*, 1881; *L'Auréole*, *Un Mariage de Paris*, 1882; all at the

tracted no particular notice, but in September (1875) she appeared in *Madame Lili*, a one-act play in verse, to such good purpose that Sarcey wrote of her: "Mademoiselle Réjane is charming, with her roguery, her ingenuousness, her tenderness. This pretty and piquant girl is spirited to her fingertips. What a piece of good luck it is that she cannot sing; for if she had a voice operetta would gobble her up."

Yet Regnier wrote to her in the following April, on the day following her appearance in *Le Premier Tapis* (in which she sang an interpolated song by Lecocq): "I was really aston-

*Vaudeville*. At various theatres: *Les Demoiselles Clochart*, *La Princess*, *Les Variétés de Paris*, *La Nuit de Noces de P. L. M.*, *La Glu*, 1882; *Ma Camarade*, 1883; *Les Femmes Terribles*, 1884; *Clara Soleil*, 1885; *Allo! Allo!*, *Monsieur de Morat*, 1886-87; *Décoré*, *Germinie Lacerteux*, *Shylock*, 1888; *Marquise*, 1889; *La Famille Benoiton*, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, *La Vie à Deux*, 1889-90; *Ma Cousine*, 1890; *Amoreuse*, *Fantasio*, *La Cigale*, *Brevet Supérieur*, 1891; *Lysistrata*, *Sapho*, 1892; *Madame Sans-Gêne*, 1893; *Villégiature*, *Les Lionnes Pauvres*, *Maison de Poupée*, 1894; *Viveurs*, 1895; *Lolotte*, *La Bonne Hélène*, *Le Partage*, *Divorçons*, 1896; *La Douleureuse*, 1897; *Paméla*, *Le Roi Candaule*, *Zaza*, *Le Calice*, *Georgette Lemeunier*, 1898; *Le Lys Rouge*, *Mme. de Lavalette*, 1899; *Le Faubourg*, *Le Béguin*, *La Robe Rouge*, *Sylvie ou la Curieuse d'Amour*, 1900; *La Pente Douce*, *La Course du Flambeau*, 1901; *La Passerelle*, *Le Masque*, *Le Joug*, 1902; *Heureuse*, *Antoinette Sabrier*, 1903; *La Montansier*, *La Parisienne*, 1904; *L'Age d'aimer*, 1905; *La Piste*, 1906. At the *Théâtre Réjane*: *La Savelli*, 1906; *Paris-New York*, *Suzeraine*, *Les Deux Madame Delauze*, 1907; *Qui Perd Gagne*, *Israël*, 1908; *Trains de luxe*, *L'Impératrice*, *Le Refuge*, 1909; *Madame Margot*, *La Flamme*, *M'Amour*, 1910; *L'Enfant de l'Amour* (at the *Porte St. Martin*), *La Revue Sans-Gêne*, 1911; *L'Aigrette*, *Un Coup de Téléphone*, *Aglaïs* (at *Comédie Royale*), 1912; *Alsace*, *L'Irrégulière*, 1913; *Le Concert*, 1914.



ished by your singing. You had better cultivate this talent, which I didn't know you had." Offenbach also heard her in this piece, and liked her singing so well that he offered her twenty thousand francs a year for her signature to a contract at the *Variétés*. Luckily she made no attempt to break her contract with the *Vaudeville*.

That contract she renewed again and again until she had played eight seasons at the theatre of her first choice. The best guide to her growing art, and to the beginnings of her fame, are found in her letters from Regnier, who followed her career with loving watchfulness, and often with frank, kindly comment on her work. Their correspondence forms a charming chapter of her youth.

Regnier's birthday fell on the first of April. Every year Réjane wrote to him on March 31 and sent him some small gift. In the year when she was beginning her work at the *Vaudeville* he wrote her:

"Ought you really send me presents, my child? Do I need assurances of your affection? Do follow my advice, dear girl, save your money and give me nothing but your friendship. That is the only present I desire from you and, I warn you, it is the only one I shall accept in the future. You hope to be able to celebrate my birthday for many years to come. I hope so too. You will never have a better friend, a better adviser, and no one, save only your mother, will ever bear your welfare more at heart. I thank

you, none the less, and with all my heart I embrace you."

At the close of a health-seeking trip she took in Holland and Belgium in the summer of 1875 he wrote: "I knew you would get many new impressions. You must always be on the search for like ones, for your spirit, your ideas, your taste, your talent will thus find themselves. Frequent our museums, stimulate your mind, read a great deal, even do a little writing. Such is the intellectual regimen that will profit your soul as the exercises I have advised will benefit your gentle body."

Less exalted advice comes after *Le Verglas* and *Le Premier Tapis*, besides the commendation of her singing in the latter piece: "Keep at your study and your work and let me repeat that it is the simple and the veracious that brings the true effect. But I was more than satisfied with you yesterday. *But*, please remember your carriage—don't waddle on one leg and then on the other; don't swallow your syllables and your words. Pronounce everything without affectation, but also without negligence. I embrace you."

After she had been a year and a half in harness, he was still emphasizing the fundamentals. After *Le Perfide comme l'Onde* he wrote (November 26, 1876): "You are very pretty and very amusing in your rôle. . . . *You are a comédienne*,—that you have proved. Between ourselves, the other young ladies frightened me a bit. Do not you allow yourself to fall into the

general carelessness of carriage and pronunciation. Really talk to those to whom your words are addressed, and when your eyes peer into the auditorium remember it is a vacuum, and never talk to any one therein. You know how to avoid this fault, so look out for it, and remain natural. But you played well, were applauded, and deserved to be."

Her work must have pleased the directors of the *Vaudeville*, for when the time came to renew her contract she signed for nine thousand francs, a considerable advance over four thousand. Her mother, however, had set her heart on nine thousand six hundred francs, and her objections threatened to break off the negotiations. Réjane promised, however, unknown to her mother, to repay the disputed six hundred francs during the engagement.

"I economized on cress," she relates. "Instead of getting two boxes at three sous apiece, I got two boxes at five sous. From time to time I put fifteen centimes into my boots. And one fine day I carried to the managers one hundred and fifty laboriously collected francs. I must say, to their credit, that they wouldn't take the money. But my mother never knew, and sometimes, endeavoring to crush me with the superiority of a strong-minded woman, she would say: "There now! Without me, you would never have had those six hundred francs."

In the summer of 1877 she grew nervous over the forthcoming production of *Pierre*. She wrote Regnier from Abbeville: "If you could

only give me one hour for the third act of *Pierre*. The nearer the time approaches, the more I fear that act—all sentiment. If I am unsupported by your good advice, my dear master, I cannot answer for myself.”

Regnier was eager to help her; and in his response he gives her more fatherly advice: “My greatest wish is to help you in your work. . . . But is it necessary for you to go to La Bourbelle, where you will stay hardly two weeks? The time seems to me much too short for serious treatment. Can’t you simply betake yourself to the waters of Enghien?”

“Talk this over with your doctor: ask him if it is really good for the nerves that that abominable musk or amber odor which perfumes your letters should permeate your whole system. No doubt the odor is agreeable, but still that is a matter of taste.”

The *première* of *Pierre* proved the first crowning success for the young actress. Immediately after the performance, unable to restrain her overflowing joy, she wrote to Regnier this enthusiastic letter:

“I have just had a *grand succès*, and I don’t wish to sleep before thanking you, to whom I owe it. I have never been so happy as I am tonight, and I believe that, if such a thing is possible, even my affection for you has grown. One thing alone distresses me, and that is my inability to repay you for all you have done. At each burst of applause, I thought of you, dear master, who have given me your time and



made sure for me my future. No affection has ever been more profound nor any gratitude so sincere, believe me. Without you I would have been nothing, but with you—two hours ago they told me I was an artist! I can open my heart to you. You cannot imagine how much is included in that one word “artist” especially to a young girl, who yesterday had doubts about the future and had need of reading all your letters in order to give courage. . . . I am doubly happy. Do not mistake for vanity the effects of the great joy I have been experiencing. How I would work, dear master, to do you the honor of registering a multitude of such nights!”

But good parts fell to Réjane’s lot only infrequently. The reigning queen of the *Vaudeville* was Mme. Bartet, and it was she, naturally, who got most of the leading rôles. The public had begun to like the young newcomer, whom it had come to know in her small but repeated successes; but nevertheless she was kept more or less in the background, encouraged only by Regnier and patiently waiting her opportunities.

It was in this fashion that she spent the remaining time at the *Vaudeville* until she left it in the spring of 1882. That period, whatever dissatisfactions it brought to her, is not without its high lights. In *Le Club* she has “*un vrai rôle*,” and played it, with gratifying success, a hundred times. In April, 1879, Mme. Bartet fell suddenly ill, and with only a few hours notice Réjane assumed the older woman’s rôle in *Les Tapageurs*. When *Les Lionnes Pauvres*

was revived, in November 1879, her *Séraphine* aroused one of those artistic controversies which delight the French mind. Sarcey disapproved, for once. M. Defère advised her to change her costumer. M. Barbey d'Aureville on the other hand said she recalled Rachel and was a true artist; Augier, the author of the play, sustained her; and stanch old Regnier wrote her at length, discoursing on the art of acting and of his *affection véritable*. Her Mimi in *La Vie de Bohème* again saw the critics at odds about her.

Altogether in her eight seasons at the *Vaudeville*, she had played more than a score of parts, some of them genuine successes. Yet she had not won genuine recognition at the hands of the directors, and her position in the company was hardly in accord with her promise and deserts. Sardou and the others responsible for the affairs of the *Vaudeville* seemed strangely blind to the fact that in Réjane they had a *comédienne* of the first order. But though she was by her superiors much of the time either kept idle or employed in almost insignificant parts, the rest of Paris speedily knew her for what she was. She was in keen demand for all the special, semi-informal performances that make up so large a part of the artistic life of the normal Paris. The "spectacles" of the *Cercle de la rue Royale*, the *revues* at the *Epatant*, the dramatic trifles that were the adjuncts of authors' readings, all found in Réjane a willing and able helper. She took these artistic informalities seriously, rehearsed for them and costumed them with care,

and was so particularly well adapted to the work that she became a marked favorite with the very social and artistic circles to which the *Vaudeville* catered.

As the directors, however, continued to give her insignificant parts, it is not strange that she listened to those friends, like Pierre Berton, who urged her to shake the dust of *Vaudeville* from her feet. "You are a star," Berton told her. It happened that a star was the quest just then of M. Bertrand of the *Variétés* and with him she signed a three years' contract.

This moment may be said to mark the definite arrival of Réjane. She was no longer to cool her heels in the greenroom or at home, and henceforth she was to play, as a rule, principal parts. Moreover, the agreement with the *Variétés* was elastic enough to allow appearances at other theatres, often in plays of more import than the light material of which the *Variétés* was the avowed medium. And when she returned, on occasion, to the *Vaudeville*, it was not in minor rôles. Réjane had assumed her due place on the stage of Paris.

It had not been a difficult rise. Though it is not possible to overlook the elements of steadfast ambition, patience, and hard work in Réjane's early career, it is true that her native spirits, her *flair*, and the training and friendship of Regnier made inevitable her right to a prominent place on the stage of Paris.

With that place assured, we see her thenceforth steadily enlarging it, progressing from

part to part, appearing now in this theatre of Paris and now in that, shortly venturing into the other capitals of Europe, then making a tour—to be later repeated—in America, and finally acquiring a theatre of her own in Paris,—an international figure, a queen of comedy.

M. Porel, whom Réjane afterward married, has given a graphic account of one of her earlier triumphs—and a typical Parisian first night. The play was de Goncourt's *Germinie Lacerteux*, the date, 1888; the theatre the *Odéon*.

"Oh, that première! The beautiful theatre was crowded to the last inch with an audience that was restless and seemed none too good-natured. The journalists were furious because the dress rehearsal had been behind closed doors. The women were puzzling themselves about the subject of the play, and some of the literary gossips were loudly telling all they thought they knew. The *café-tiers* of the neighborhood, disgruntled because the usual five *entr'actes* had been cut down to two, were protesting to the *claque* against the change, which interfered with the sale of the usual five books. Amid the confusion of the lobbies were heard remarks that the piece was impossible.

"The curtain rises; Réjane makes her appearance, with her arms as red as those of a kitchen-girl. In the ball gown of a servant-maid she is indeed amazing. This little scene she plays well, and wins applause. In the scene of the fortifications, some of the hissers are in evidence before she enters; and then Réjane, so



prettily modest, plays her idyllic scene so well that the delighted audience breaks into cries of 'Bravo!', and the curtain is raised and raised again. . . . In one of the following scenes, some of the audience refuse to listen to Mme. Crosnier; she becomes confused, loses her head and begins over again. Some cry aloud, some laugh, some hiss. Without Réjane the piece will go on the rocks. A gesture, a poignant, sincere cry, and Réjane has the house with her again. They applaud her, they recall her again and again. During the *entr'acte*, there is a stormy time. Antoine is indignant over the sneering of his neighbors and calls them scoundrelly imbeciles. There is shaking of fists, challenges are exchanged, some hiss, others applaud. It is in this atmosphere that the scene in the creamery begins. Then it was that she quite won the house. She is again recalled again and again, applauded by the whole audience. She is acclaimed again, after the fall of the curtain in the scene of the *Rue du Roiher*. The ladies were completely upset; they wept, they clapped their hands. Even without Réjane, the two last scenes finished themselves somehow. After that, de Goncourt's play was to live more than one night; and after that Réjane was assuredly a great *comédienne*."

Two years later, when *Ma Cousine*, a comedy in three acts by Henri Meilbac, was produced, Paris saw that Réjane had again made extraordinary progress. "Playing," says M. Huret, "in a vast auditorium, a rôle that demanded

large dramatic power, she responded to that demand, and exhibited new poise, control of voice, and exactness of articulation. She who had heretofore almost expired of apprehension at each new impersonation, was now calm, sure of herself, almost indifferent. She sensed the authority that had come to her; she held the audience in her hand. In *Décoré*, in *Monsieur Betsy*, she had been one of a remarkable trio of actresses; now, in *Ma Cousine*, she outshone her *confrères* at all points. The author had set her the difficult task of playing an act three quarters of an hour long without rising from her couch. But she was equal to the occasion, and, by the intelligence and sprightliness of her inflections, gestures and facial expression, she made that chair itself a miniature theatre." It was in *Ma Cousine* that Réjane introduced on the boards of the *Variétés*, after careful study, a bit of dancing like that on view at the *Elysée-Montmartre*; "she seized on and imitated the grotesque effrontery of Mlle. Grille-d'Egout." In other words the sprightly Gabrielle performed a veritable can-can.

A little later M. Meunier, who was not remarkable for his kindness in print to the dean of his craft, wrote: "Sarcey's exultation knew no bounds when, in 1890, Réjane again appeared in *Décoré*. Time, that had metamorphosed the lissom critic of 1875 into a round and inert mass of solid flesh, cruel Father Time, gave back to Sarcey, for this occasion only, a flash of youthful fire, which stirred his wits to warmth and

animation. He shouted out hardly articulate praise; he literally rolled in his stall with pleasure; his bald head blushed like an aurora borealis. 'Look at her!' he cried, 'See her malicious smiles, her feline graces, listen to her reserved and biting diction; she is the very essence of the Parisienne! What an ovation she received! How they applauded her! and how she played!' From M. Sarcey the laugh spreads; it thaws the skepticism of M. Jules Lemaître, engulfs the timidity of the public, becomes unanimous and universal, and is no longer to be silenced.'

The day of Réjane's greatest and most lasting success came with the production, in 1893, of *Madame Sans-Gêne*, by Sardou, the latest of the Parisian dramatists to answer the call of the great *comédienne* in their midst.

"Just as the first dressmakers of Paris measure Réjane's fine figure for the costumes of her various rôles, so the best writers of the French Academy now make plays to her measure," wrote M. Meunier in 1894. "They take the size of her temperament, the height of her talent, the breadth of her acting; they consider her taste, they flatter her mood; they clothe her with the richest draperies she can covet. Their imagination, their fancy, their cleverness, are all put at her service. The leaders in this industry have hitherto been Messrs. Meilhac and Halévy, but now M. Victorien Sardou is ruining them. *Madame Sans-Gêne* is certainly, of all the rôles Réjane has played, that best suited to bring out

her manifold resources. It is not merely that Réjane play the washerwoman, become a great lady, without blemish or omission; she is *Madame Sans-Gêne* herself, with no overloading, nothing forced, nothing caricatured. It is portraiture; history.

"Many a time has Réjane appeared in cap, cotton frock, and white apron; many a time in robes of state, glittering with diamonds; she has worn the buskin or the sock, demeaned herself like a gutter heroine, or dropped the stately curtsy of the high-born lady. But never, except in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, has she been able to bring all her rôles into one focus, exhibit her whole wardrobe, and yet remain one and the same person, compress into one evening the whole of her life."

What sort of woman presented herself to the gaze of her Parisian admirers—and soon to American eyes—at this, the time of her greatest triumph? Whatever other gifts she brought to her work, sheer beauty was not one of them. "Is it her beauty?" asked M. Filon, seeking the source of her power, and of her perfect understanding with her audiences. "Certainly not. She is not pretty; one might even say . . . but it is more polite not to say it. To quote a famous *mot*, 'She is not beautiful, she is worse.'"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "Her queer little face catches hold of you, by both the good and bad elements in your nature. All the intelligence, the devotion, the pity of a woman are to be read in her wonderful eyes, but below there is the nose and mouth of a sen-



Though Réjane never had the least claim to Mr. Vance Thompson's rhapsodic description of her as "amazingly and diabolically beautiful," she really has no quarrel with the fate that made her as she is. Comedy was to be her mission, and if Wilde was right in his dictum that "what serves its purpose is beautiful," beautiful she is, after all. For plain though it be, her face is a true comedy mask. "There is comedy in every line of her face, in the arched eyebrows, the well opened, dancing eyes, the tip-tilted nose, and the wonderful, mobile, expressive mouth," says William Archer. "This mouth is unquestionably the actress' chief feature; it conditions her art. With a different mouth she might have been a tragedian or a heroine of melodrama, which would have been an immense pity. It is not a beautiful feature from the sculptor's point of view; even from the painter's it is not so much a rose-bud as a full-blown rose. It has almost the wide-lipped expansiveness of a Greek mask, but it is sensitive, ironic, amiable, fascinating."

To others, her eyes have been her chief charm. They are large and gray, changeful with the flexibility of Réjane's whole nature, surmounted

sual little creature, a vicious, almost vulgar, smile, lips pouted for a kiss, but with a lingering, or a dawning, suggestion of irony. Moreover, she is exactly the reigning type, the type that one meets constantly on the Paris pavements when the shop girls are going to lunch. If you happen to be born *marquise* or *duchesse* you copy the type, and the result is all the more piquant."—Augustin Filon, "The Modern French Drama."

by extraordinarily lofty and expressive brows, and often half covered by eyelids almost languorous. Her hair is, or at least was, golden brown. She is not tall. She is by no means commanding in figure. There is nothing of the imposing stage queen about her; yet, in figure, as in face, she has been perfectly equipped for her work as *comédienne de Paris*. Being just that, she makes her hands and her body means to her histrionic ends. Those who have repeatedly studied her art have found the subtlety, the distinction, and the perfect command of her gestures and her poses more than a match for even the brightness, or the sadness or the tenderness of her face. In every critique of Réjane there crops out a pointed reference to her wonderful fluency and flexibility of style, her fertility of invention of expressive detail, the naturalness of her transitions of mood. "Elasticity, dexterity and rapidity she has in a superlative degree, and with them grace and geniality, together with simple pathos and honest heat of temper. And of course she possesses that peculiar fineness of taste which belongs to her nation and which is very apparent in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, whose heroine may be crude and uncultivated, but is never boorish or clownish, is awkward but not ugly. Her voice is clear and pleasant, but her elocution is less distinct than that of many other French artists, although her tones mark unmistakably the spiritual and intellectual differences which fluctuate through her speeches. She has an unfailing regard for the

proportions of her scenes, and never obtrudes herself into a prominent place just because she is the star of the company.”<sup>10</sup>

We have heard much of the comic finesse of Réjane's *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Now listen to one acute observer (Arthur Symons) of another side of her genius: “Réjane can be vulgar, as nature is vulgar; she has all the instincts of the human animal, of the animal woman, whom man will never quite civilize . . . Réjane, in *Sapho* or *Zaza* for instance, is woman . . . loving and suffering with all her nerves and muscles, a gross, pitiable, horribly human thing, whose direct appeal, like that of a sick animal, seizes you by the throat at the instant in which it reaches your eyes and ears. More than any actress she is the human animal without disguise or evasion; with all the instincts, all the natural cries and movements. In *Sapho* or *Zaza* she speaks the language of the senses, no more. . . . In being *Zaza*, she is so far from being herself (what is the self of a great actress?) that she has invented a new way of walking, as well as new tones and grimaces. There is not an effect in the play which she has not calculated; only, she has calculated every effect so exactly that the calculation is not seen.”

M. Filon confessed himself baffled by the question of whether Réjane's marvelous liquidness of mood and method is due to something essential in her nature, or merely to an incomparable

<sup>10</sup> The Boston *Courier*, May 19, 1895.

power of imitation. "If I shut my eyes," he says, "I sometimes think I can hear the nasal intonation, the little squeaky voice which belonged to Céline Chaumont. A minute later this voice has the cadence, the sustained vibration, the artistic break with which Sarah Bernhardt punctuates her diction, and the transition is so skillfully managed that all these different women—the woman who mocks, the woman who trembles, the woman who threatens, the woman who desires, the woman who laughs, and the woman who weeps—seem to be one and the same woman. For the matter of that, I have set myself a problem which I should not be able to solve even with the help of Réjane herself. Let us be content with what lies on the surface. I am inclined to think that her resources consist of a host of petty artifices, each more ingenious and more imperceptible than the last. If one studied her secret one might draw up a whole set of rules for the use of *comédiennes*."

With *Sans-Gêne* among her achievements, more and more word of her became known outside of France. Unmitigatedly French though she was, though there was little in her to suggest the universal appeal that has made world artists of other actresses, by the sheer merit of the thing she did, and because she was so complete an epitome of one phase of her nation's art, she was bound to become an international figure. Her first appearance in London was in June, 1894. Her *Sans-Gêne* there instantly won her the recognition she deserved. America



had not long to wait. On February 27, 1895 she appeared in *Madame Sans-Gêne* in New York. She remained there several weeks, playing in *Divorçons*, *Sapho*, *Ma Cousine*, the one act play *Lolotte*, and *Maison de Poupée* (Ibsen's *A Doll's House*), besides *Sans-Gêne*. Ten years later<sup>11</sup> she made her second and last tour in America. In the meantime Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Russia, Austria, Roumania, Italy, Spain and Portugal had all seen her. Regnier's nose rubbing had assuredly been to good purpose.

One may as well admit at once that Réjane's tours in the United States were not successful, in the sense that continuously crowded houses indicate success. The language was, of course, one stumbling block, for a keen understanding of the foreign tongue was more necessary for a taste for Réjane than for the broad effects, say, of a Bernhardt or a Salvini. And if the language fell on baffled ears, the essence of the plays, in some cases, antagonized the more puritanical of our public. For the pieces Réjane played reflected a society and a point of view for which many Americans found it hard to muster much sympathy. So meager was the American response to Réjane's art during her first visit that she forswore us forever. Nine years sufficed to make her change her mind.

<sup>11</sup> Her second American season began in New York, Nov. 7, 1904. During this tour she appeared for the first time in America in *Amoureuse*, *La Passerelle*, *Zaza*, *La Petite Marquise*, and *La Hirondelle*.

"But now (1904) as then," said the *New York Times*, "she is hampered by the moral bias of American audiences, and by the fact that the manners she so searchingly studies and exquisitely depicts are exotic—foreign alike to our sympathies and our experience."

Whatever her popular success in America may or may not have been, Réjane—in some of her parts at least—won the enthusiastic praise of the critics and of the restricted public that knew its French well enough to meet her on something like Parisian terms. The *pièce de résistance* of the first tour was *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Like most of Sardou's later dramas, it was a "tailor-made" play, written to suit the personality and methods of its principal actress.<sup>12</sup> A secondary object was evident in the effort to take advantage of the revival of interest in Napoleon that marked, for no evident reason, the early nineties. Technically the play was interesting chiefly as showing the author in a new phase, for it was surprising to find Sardou, a notorious disciple of Scribe, writing a piece that was little more than a series of

<sup>12</sup> Originally *Madame Sans-Gêne* was to have been produced at the *Grand-Théâtre*, of which M. Porel, Réjane's husband, was manager. He gave up the house, however, before the play could be given. Other managers begged for it, but of each in turn M. Sardou demanded: "Have you Réjane in your company?" and as the answer was always in the negative, he added: "Then there is no use of our talking about it." Soon M. Carré admitted M. Porel to a co-directorship of the *Vaudeville*, and there the play was produced, with immediately great success. M. Sardou was not the sole author. He had considerable help from M. Moreau.

sketches. But Réjane lifted the whole affair to a height at which it could be regarded only as one of the triumphs of the nineteenth century theatre.

Réjane's freshness, naturalness, tenderness, and charmingly subtle sense of comedy as Catherine Hubscher in *Madame Sans-Gêne* was instantly recognized and celebrated in every American city that she visited. In *Ma Cousine*, a light farce, she acted the soubrette *Riquette* with an abandon, a cleverness, a joyousness, that emphasized her new public's admiration of her. Her Nora, however, in *Maison de Poupée* (Ibsen's *A Doll's House*), revealed her in a new and more serious light, demonstrating at once her genuine versatility and her considerable emotional power. Even the unsavory *Sapho* she made something new and different, "moderating its excesses and enhancing its better moods. Less pathetic directly than by suggestion, she often moved by simple means a sympathy which *Sapho* ill deserved."

Just before Réjane began her second American tour she had an unhappy experience in Havana. She gave there a series of eight performances, the total result being chronicled in the American papers as a "fiasco." She had a welcome such as no actor or actress had ever before received in Cuba. Thousands gathered at the pier as a private steamer went out to meet her and bring her ashore; formal addresses of welcome and bouquets were showered on her; and the Havana papers were full of

odes and eulogies. The first-night audience that gathered to see *Sapho* was the most brilliant ever seen in Havana, and the applause that greeted Réjane's entrance was prolonged and hearty. But the audience grew colder and colder as the play progressed. The next day began a festival period for the dramatic critics of Havana. They pounced upon *Sapho* and Daudet, its author, and declared that while his sort of "esoteric rot" might be what Frenchmen regard as the product of genius, they rejoiced that such stuff could not pass as art in Havana.<sup>13</sup> Matters grew worse with *La Petite Marquise* and *Zaza*, the company and the mediocre productions were abused ("What did the actress mean by leaving everything except her costumes in New York?" the papers asked. "Does she believe that 'any old thing' is good enough for Havana?"), and the young ladies of Havana were all kept away from Réjane's improper plays. Personalities became frequent in the papers, and one critic boldly asserted that Réjane's star had set. Her manager made matters worse by revoking the passes of one paper, the lady herself provoked more criticism by her refusal to be a guest at a reception at the Athenæum, and altogether affairs reached such a pass that every one was immensely relieved when Réjane and her company sailed away for New York. The whole incident indicated more than anything else the

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence of Frederick Roy Martin in the *Boston Transcript*, November 9, 1904.



narrow outlook of the Cubans. "We are making our political independence apply to everything," wrote one of the critics. "America for the Americans, and Cuba for the Cubans! Let the foreigner get out!"

When Réjane reached America her audiences found that she could not altogether conceal the traces left by the flight of time—she was now forty-seven—but that she had suffered no loss of her vivacity and power. The tour of 1904–05 was not, however, the improvement over that of ten years earlier that had been hoped for. The enthusiasm of American audiences was not to be won over by the cynicism and frankness of such pieces as *Amoureuse*, though the critics were not slow to recognize the subtle and convincing quality of Réjane's work even in that play, which Mr. Winter gently characterized as "filthy trash."

An unexpected circumstance gave new emphasis to the half-heartedness of her welcome in the United States. It was simply a bit of bad luck for Réjane, an injustice to a distinguished woman and artist, and an illustration of the influence of American newspaper publicity. James Hazen Hyde, then in the public eye because of his share in the insurance scandals, was—as he has always since been—a generous patron of the American study of French literature. He gave a dinner in New York to honor the actress whose claim to honor none knew better than he. It was said that on behalf of himself and his guests he gave her a dia-

mond crown. Accurately or not, it was reported next day—and the news was not slow in traveling,—that Réjane's gratefulness and Gallicism took the form of her doing a sprightly dance on the table. The incident was not important, but the wide publicity given it did not tend to increase Réjane's hold on that part of the public to which she had, on her merits, so good a claim.

To get all the scandal over with at once, let us dispose of Réjane's husband. In 1892 she had married M. Porel, who had been an actor, then director of the *Odéon*, and then of *Grand-Théâtre*. Soon after the marriage he became co-director of the *Vaudeville* and the *Gymnase*. Early in the marriage there were two children, a daughter and a son. On more than one occasion Madame Réjane began divorce proceedings, which were halted when friends intervened and kept the couple together in the interest of the children or of the parents' professional welfare. Finally both sued for divorce. After many preliminaries the husband was granted the decree, though, eventually at least, the children were left with the mother.

Naturally, the *Vaudeville* was no longer open to her. But, as Arnold Bennett (then not yet the distinguished novelist) wrote in *P. T. O.*,<sup>14</sup> though "Réjane may now and then suffer a brief eclipse, she can be absolutely relied upon to emerge in a more blinding glory. Exiled

<sup>14</sup> Dec. 29, 1906.

from her proper home, the *Vaudeville*, she naturally wanted a theatre. She has got it. She took hold of the *Nouveau Théâtre*, the unlikeliest and one of the most uncomfortable theatres in Paris—the Lamoureux concerts alone have succeeded there. She removed everything from within its four walls, and presently frequenters of the *Rue Blanche* observed that the legend *Théâtre Réjane* had been carved on its façade. Last week she announced to her friends (that is to say, to Paris) that she would be ‘at home’ on such and such a night. The invitation added, ‘Comedy will be played.’ Her friends went, and discovered the wonderfulest theatre in the town, incredibly spacious, with lounges as big as the auditorium, wide corridors, and a scheme of decoration at once severe and splendid. Réjane was written all over it, even in the costumes of the women attendants. Paris was charmed, astounded, electrified; and now Réjane flames a more brilliant jewel than ever in the forehead of the capital.”

There, during the past ten years, she has appeared in more than a score of new plays, none of them, perhaps, a new *Sans-Gêne* or *Marquise*, but each serving to keep in vigorous use one of the rarest talents of the time. During this time, too, she has acted in South America (1909), and occasionally, and as recently as the spring of 1915, she has gone to London, where she has always been appreciated, sometimes to act in the regular theatres, and sometimes to give in the music halls one-act pieces like

*Lolotte*, and scenes from the longer plays.<sup>15</sup> "Madame Réjane long since announced to the world, by publicly going about with a grown-up daughter, that she meant no more to depend for even the smallest part of her charm and her power upon the semblance of youthfulness," wrote Mr. Bennett in 1906. "She is a middle-aged woman, and she doesn't care who knows it." She is now even more certainly a middle-aged woman, but she still has much of her essential vitality, and of the force of a distinguished personality.

Off the stage Madame Réjane has always been a gracious and likable woman, of a gentle, polished manner and lovable disposition that do not always go with a pronounced and much applauded personality. She has a summer place, "*Petit Manoir*," a large, semi-Elizabethan villa at Hennequeville, near Trouville, on the Normandy coast. There it has been her habit to live quietly whenever her engagements permitted, with her daughter Germaine and her son Jacques. She has always indulged a taste for *objets de vertu*. "When not with her children or at the theatre," says Huret, "she is likely to find time to go in search of paintings, or books or fine fabrics, a curious old fan, a bit of unique lace, or a rare flower or jewel, with the joyous ardor that she puts into everything and, as in her art, spending immense energy to

<sup>15</sup> In 1906, she attempted, with M. Gaston Mayer, to found a French repertoire theatre in London, but the experiment was not successful and lasted only one season.



achieve the exquisite and the delicate, in a word, everything that makes for the joy of working and of life." The "*joie de travailler*" is one characteristic of the great *comédienne* that is likely to escape the casual public. But work hard she did, and she made her company work hard. "On the road" it was the regular thing to have daily rehearsals, no matter what familiarity with the plays had been attained.

"The amazing variety of her artistry has been expressed," says Huret, "by two famous portraits of her, one by Chartran, the other by Besnard. You could paint nothing more strikingly truthful than these portraits, yet you cannot dream how unlike they are. . . . Besnard has retained only those traits of his sitter which give her an expression that is energetic, even a little brutal and sensual,—the popular Réjane, the Réjane of the *Ambigu*, of realistic drama, the Réjane of *La Glu* and *Germinie Lacerteux*. Despite her silk gown and all her finery, Besnard has seen her with the down-at-heel cloth boots that Germinie wore to third-rate balls, and in the white floss-silk gloves which, to get a realistic touch, she had borrowed from her servant-maid. That Réjane he has caught admirably!

"But it is not thus that she has appeared to Chartran. He has seen her in a dainty lace head-dress adorned with a rose-colored ribbon, her hair loose over her eyes, her mobile mouth, her gracious oval face. Above all he has seen her extraordinary and complex eyes, now quick,

now velvety, now perverse beneath their large, languorous eyelids: eyes that are mocking, ardent, sparkling and dreamy. This is the Réjane of Meilhac's plays, the Réjane who is of the line of *comédiennes* of the eighteenth century; it is *Ma Cousine* who is about to become *Amoureuse*.

"And this astonishing complexity of temperament is reflected in her childhood, in her life, and in her tastes to-day. The youngster who passed her evenings in the balcony of the *Ambigu* sucking an orange, who stood in ecstasy before the glass of Adèle Page, and who for years dreamed of such a life as the acme of luxury,—her one sees in the portrait by Besnard. But the young lady of the *Conservatoire*, the favorite pupil of Regnier, who won her first success in *L'Intrigue Épistolaire*, the elegant and finished interpreter of the life of the *salons* and *cercles*, the full-grown *artiste* of *Marquise*: all these live in the painting of Chartran."

"*Ces deux jolis noms d'une seule et même personne: Réjane, Madame Sans-Gêne*"; thus one of her countrymen happily characterized her. But another was just as right when he called her "the innumerable Réjane."



ELEONORA DUSE





## ELEONORA DUSE

WHEN the American papers announced, in the spring of 1914, that Eleonora Duse had recovered her health and was contemplating a return to the stage, the news had a curious effect, somewhat as if the New York press had casually said that "Ada Rehan and Mr. Daly's company are to play *The Taming of the Shrew* next Monday." A little later the cable brought the announcement that Bernhardt was thinking of coming again to America, and though Mme. Sarah is almost old enough to be Duse's mother, the news of her coming had not the same effect of turning the clock backward. For Bernhardt is apparently one of the earth's permanent phenomena, like the return of vegetation in the spring; while the tragic figure of Duse, though she played in America only a dozen years ago, seems somehow to belong to the last generation.

She is, however, not yet really an old woman, for she was born October 3, 1859. The genius of strange and hard experience, which has attended her all her life, was present even at her birth, for it occurred in a third-class carriage of a railway train, near Vigevano, while her parents, the members of a band of actors, were on

their way from Venice to Milan. A troubled life then began.

For two generations, at least, her forebears had been player-folk, of a rather humble station, most of them. An uncle was a player differing greatly in kind from his famous niece, for he was known throughout Northern Italy as an uproariously funny comedian.<sup>1</sup> Her grandfather, Luigi Duse, was of a somewhat more serious turn, and of a more important rank in the profession, for he is said to have founded the Garibaldi Theatre at Padua. He founded also a troupe of Venetian dialect comedians which was famous for many years. His four sons were all actors, and one of them, Eleonora Duse's father, was a painter as well. Ultimately he left the stage to devote himself to that art. Duse's mother, too, was an actress, and, after her child was baptized<sup>2</sup> and had attained the age of ten days, resumed her place in the company, which now had another prospective member added to its roster. Literally

<sup>1</sup> It is probably for this comedian that the street *Calle Duse* in Chioggio, near Venice, is named.

<sup>2</sup> "A curious circumstance attended her baptism at Vigevano. In accordance with the custom of the country the child was carried to the church in a shrine gilded and ornamented with jewels. A detachment of Austrian soldiery marched past the baptismal procession, and mistaking the shrine for the relics of some saint, halted and saluted. When he returned to his wife the father said to her: 'Forgive me, dear, that I am unable to bring me a present for giving me a daughter, but I can give you a happy omen. Our daughter will be something great some day; already they have shown her military honors.'"

Duse knew the theatre and its people from the first day of her life, and was forced into its service as a matter of course.

The father and mother were humble strolling players who wandered about, often on foot, making a scanty living. The young Eleonora's childhood was thus filled on the one hand with poverty, often hunger, and on the other hand, with the actor's trade under her observation and a part of her daily instruction.<sup>3</sup> Hers was really not a childhood at all, a fact that helps to explain the note of melancholy and tragedy that has pervaded her whole life.

A career as a stage child, however, seems to be the thing that produces the notable actress,—the Siddons, the Terry, the Mrs. Fiske,—if only the added something is present to endow the unconsciously absorbed technique with the significance of personality and high intelligence.

At seven Eleonora was the prompter of the company. But she soon began to absorb the words and something of the meaning of certain rôles. At ten she was playing Cosette in *Les Misérables*. By the time she was twelve she was regularly appearing on the rustic stages, often impersonating characters far older than herself. There was much in the old life of the strolling players that made for joyousness—witness Modjeska's tribute to her early experience of such life—and the young Duse was

<sup>3</sup> In after years, when she had won fame and name, she used to carry about a little antique coffer in which as a babe she used to lie while her mother was upon the stage.

not without her gay moods, in those days, but responsibility, hard work and the impersonation of adult and much-troubled women, while she was still in her middle 'teens, inclined her toward the seriousness that has characterized her life. When she was fourteen her mother died, and her duties as *tragédienne* were supplemented by the care of younger children. Is it any wonder that she soon seemed to be "walking through life like a somnambulist"?<sup>4</sup>

Before she was sixteen she had acted a round of tragic parts, among them Doña Sol, Francesca da Rimini (in the play by Pellico) and Caverina, the heroine of Victor Hugo's *Angelo*. When she was just over sixteen she played Juliet, in Verona itself. The theatre—it was the "Arena," an open-air theatre—was crowded, and the actress roused the assembly to enthusiasm by a Juliet that was girlish, beautiful and natural.

But her term of what we would call "barnstorming" was not to end yet. The vagabondage continued, varied first with a tour of Dalmatia, and then by an occasional engagement, in small rôles, apart from the family company.

In 1879, when she was twenty, the company she had joined was playing in Naples. Here,

<sup>4</sup> According to Jean Dornis (*Le Théâtre Italien Contemporain*) her father said that she contracted a disease known as *Salmara*—or "The Spleen of Venice." The victim of this ailment is "enveloped, as in a fantastic mist, with the sadness of the past, the bitterness of the present, and the uncertainty of the future."



for some reason, its leading actress was lost to it, on the eve of the presentation of *Thérèse Raquin*. To Duse, in the emergency, was assigned the part of Thérèse. The stage—that of the old Florentine Theatre—was a famous one; Salvini and Ristori had often trod its boards. And she was to face the most discerning public that had yet seen her. The result was in the way of recompense to Duse for her years of struggle and poverty. Cesare Rossi, one of the distinguished men of the theatre in the Italy of his day, was present. Immediately he offered to place her under his own management. Duse's years of apprenticeship may be said to end at this point, for from now on her progress was steadily upward.

Her marriage, which came at this time, when she was about twenty, was only a brief interruption. It was another touch of tragedy in Duse's life. With her, "it has been difficult to choose the point when the make believe of the theatre ended and the reality of life began." Her husband was a Signor Checchi, an actor of mediocre ability. A daughter was born, but the marriage was to Duse a great disappointment.

Back to the stage she went, after this time of trial, with little heart for her work, though Rossi had given her a good contract. Then, in 1880, while she was in Turin, she saw Bernhardt in *La Princesse de Bagdad*, one of the plays by which the younger Dumas was making inroads on the old-fashioned classical reper-

toire. Duse at once announced her intention to play in the same piece. The resulting negotiations with Dumas served not only to introduce some of his plays—of course translated into Italian—into the theatre in Italy, but to begin a warm though curiously impersonal friendship between the author and the rising young actress. She conceived the most ardent admiration for the man and his work, and it was not long before he was urging her to try her fortunes in Paris. Many years were to elapse before she was to make that venture, for very good reasons, as will later appear.<sup>5</sup>

Dumas, it would appear, and the success with which she made his plays, *La Princesse de Bagdad* <sup>6</sup> and *La Femme de Claude*, understood and

<sup>5</sup> Years after the time of which we are speaking, the two met at the home of Dumas, at Marly. When she found herself in the room with the man she had long venerated, she was speechless with emotion, and, the accounts say, burst into tears. When she finally acted in Paris, in 1897, Dumas was dead. She acted there on the occasion of the great testimonial to his memory. See page 188.

<sup>6</sup> In the last edition of his plays Dumas appends a footnote to *La Princesse de Bagdad*: "There is in the last scene a stage direction that is not found in other editions. After having said to her husband: 'I am innocent, I swear it to you, I swear it to you,' Leonetta, seeing him incredulous, places her hand on the head of her son and says a third time, 'I swear it to you!' This gesture, so noble and convincing, was not used in Paris. Neither Mlle. Croizette nor I thought of it; none the less, it was irrefutable and irresistible. Inflection alone, however powerful, was not enough." As a matter of fact, until Duse introduced this bit of "business" no one had ever been able to make the scene convincing, and as the success of the whole play hangs on this scene, *La Princesse de Bagdad* had always been a comparative failure. Dumas goes on to pay tribute to Duse for introducing his work into Italy,

liked in Italy, had a large share in restoring her interest in life and her work, and in increasing her fame. She was rapidly becoming known throughout Italy. By the time of her first venture outside of Italy—which took her to far-away South America<sup>7</sup>—she had achieved success in Turin, in Rome and in Milan.

As yet there was little thought of her as other than an Italian for the Italians. Dumas' appeals to act in Paris had always been in vain. If reports of her acting had been carried home by visitors from the great capitals, she was not thought of, as yet, as a world's actress. To carry plays to Moscow, to Vienna, to Berlin, and act them there effectively in a foreign tongue, an actress must needs be of great power, must have a genius that makes itself felt above all differences of speech. In 1892 she went to Vienna, comparatively unheralded, and from there word went forth that a new and great actress had come from her native Italy and blazed into a sudden glory. Francisque Sarcy, the distinguished French critic, had followed the company of the *Comédie Française* to Vienna, and from there wrote to the *Temps* accounts of her display of versatility in playing equally well *Antony* and *Cleopatra*, *La Dame aux Camélias* ("Camille") and *Divorçons*. Sworn admirer of Bernhardt that he was, he easily found faults in Duse,

and in conclusion says: "It is to be regretted for our art that this extraordinary actress is not French."

<sup>7</sup> 1885.

but he praised her justly too: "She is not handsome, but has an intelligent and expressive face and wonderful mobility of features. Her voice is not particularly musical, but its occasional metallic vibrations produce thrilling effects. Her diction, like Mme. Bernhardt's, is distinct and clear, each syllable coming out with well-rounded edges." Though Sarcey thought her, as Cleopatra, to have "the air of a crowned grisette," (in contrast to Sarah, who was "always the Queen of Egypt") he confessed that "La Duse carried the house by storm with her alternate explosions of fury and sudden tones of touching tenderness." Sarcey's early sympathy for Duse was, as we shall see, to be of benefit to her later. During this transalpine tour Duse acted in Russia and Germany, as well as in Austria; and now was to come her first venture in an English-speaking country.

In 1893 Americans interested in the European stage knew that Duse had achieved fame in her own country and had succeeded notably in Austria and Germany. The average American theatregoer knew little of her. Even those who had heard of her had little notion that she really was an actress of the first rank, fully worthy of comparison with Bernhardt and Modjeska.

On an evening of January, 1893, when a large and brilliant audience assembled at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York to see her in *Camille*, the prevailing atmosphere was there-



fore one of curiosity.<sup>8</sup> Duse had not long to wait before striking fire. One who was present said: "Her power over an audience was manifested in a very striking manner before she had been on the stage five minutes. The actress had scarcely made her appearance and given her careless nod of recognition to De Varville before everybody was in an attitude of strained attention. Already the old and hackneyed character had been revived by the power of genius. Signora Duse does not attempt to make a Frenchwoman of Camille, but fills her with the fire and passion of her own Italian temperament. But both the fire and passion, except at very rare intervals, are kept under complete control. Their glow is apparent in all the love scenes, and breaks into flame at one or two critical moments, but it is by the suggestion of force in reserve that she makes her most striking effects. Only an artist of the highest type could create so profound an impression with so little apparent effort or forethought, by some light and seemingly spontaneous gesture, by a sudden change of facial expression, or by some subtle inflection of the

<sup>8</sup> Though her first night audience was described as "large and brilliant," Duse's audiences during her first American tour were generally not large in numbers. They were, however, drawn from a discriminating part of the public, the part that regards the drama as an art and goes to the theatre only when its own high standards are likely to be met. During the 1896 tour she attracted the same discerning public, but also, this time, that other public which runs to fads. "La Duse" became something of a fad, but happily at no sacrifice of the quality of her acting.

voice. The chief beauties of her impersonation are to be found in its lesser and, to the inexperienced eye, insignificant details. All her by-play, although it appears to be due only to the impulse of the moment, is clearly the result of the most deliberate design, and changes with every variety of mood or condition which it is meant to illustrate. The impetuous, audacious, bored and querulous Camille of the first act becomes quite another creature beneath the softening influence of the love passages with Armand—such love passages as have not been witnessed in a New York theatre half a dozen times in this generation—and is transformed into a type of placid and contented womanhood in the country home of Armand. She played the whole of this act with perfect skill and profoundest pathos, and in the scene of parting with her lover, she suggested the heart-breaking under a smile, with a simplicity so true and so poignant that her own suppressed sob found many an echo in the audience.”<sup>9</sup> In the many accounts of Duse’s Camille there is constant reference to a simple and telling interpolation that she made in the scene in which Armand publicly denounces her. Where other actresses have sought to express Marguérite’s feelings only

<sup>9</sup> *The Critic*, for January 28, 1893. The story has often been told of Mme. Bartet, the distinguished actress of the *Comédie Française*, and Duse’s swoon in *La Dame aux Camélias*. So powerful and so natural was Duse at the point where Marguérite swoons, that Bartet, perhaps sensible of Duse’s own bodily weakness, cried out: “Great Heavens! She has really fainted.”

through facial expression and pantomime, Duse spoke at intervals during his tirade her lover's name—"Armand!"—at first in simple incredulity, then in fright, then in deeply hurt pride, then in heart-breaking anguish.<sup>10</sup> Sarcy, however, severely condemned her for making this emendation, which, he thought, ruined the naturalness and effectiveness of the scene.

Duse had come unheralded, but her few weeks in New York proved a genuine "sensation." She followed *Camille* with *Fédora*, in which she again demonstrated her strange power of creating a stirring dramatic effect by the simplest and apparently the most unstudied means. As Clotilde in *Fernande* she presented another type: "The change wrought in her by the dispatch that proved her lover's perfidy was an extraordinary illustration of suppressed emotion, and the remorseless deliberation of her manner while beguiling the faithless Andre into

<sup>10</sup> There is much in Mrs. Fiske's acting to remind one of Duse, different as the two are in many ways. There is in each, in the first place, the same service to an art of an exceptional intellect, the same high minded devotion to ideals. Each has been a mistress of the subtleties, both of conceptions of characters and of means to set those conceptions forth. Each depends on the significant repression of emotion, rather than on expansive exposition of emotion. Each is, in spite of a fundamental seriousness, expert in comedy. Coming to details, each depends largely on rapidity of utterance, with occasional arbitrary pauses. Of the former—in a possible excess—Mrs. Fiske has been sufficiently charged; the latter Duse has been sometimes accused of carrying to undue lengths. Finally each has her wholesome distaste for eccentricities and meretricious publicity. Mrs. Fiske is Duse translated into American.

the net which she had spread for him was intensely eloquent of a woman scorned. Not until after the marriage had been accomplished did she give vent to the rage which she had restrained so long; but when the floodgates of passion were once opened, the torrent of her wrath and hate and scorn might almost be called appalling. This one revelation of her power would place her instantly in the front rank of emotional actresses."<sup>11</sup> Another jealous woman was revealed in Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Astonishing in this part was the complete sinking of her own personality in that of a peasant woman. By voice, walk, subtle suggestions of gesture and pose, she achieved a masterpiece in what the French call "getting within the skin" of a character. When to the other impersonations she added her Mirandolina in *La Locandiera*, a part calling for a charming archness and humor, and as sure a touch in comedy as Santuzza in tragedy, her wide range was astonishingly revealed.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *The Critic*, February 11, 1893.

<sup>12</sup> During her tour in America in 1893, Duse's parts were: Marguérite Gauthier in *La Dame aux Camélias*; *Fédora*; Clotilde in *Fernande*; Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*; Mirandolina in *La Locandiera*; Cyprienne in *Divorçons*; Francine in *Francillon*, and Césarine in *La Femme de Claude*. During her second American tour in 1896, Duse played *Magda* for the first time in this country, and also some plays from her former repertoire, *La Dame aux Camélias*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *La Locandiera*. On her next visit, in 1902, which was during the d'Annunzio period, she played *La Gioconda*, *La Citta Morta*, and *Francesca da Rimini*, all by d'Annunzio.



After visiting a few other American cities, Duse's company arrived in London, and opened an engagement there in May (1893). She was the first Italian since Salvini to claim London's serious attention. She was at least as unknown there to "the general" as she had been in New York, though of course there were many who had either seen her on the continent or had read glowing accounts of her. But there were many, at first, to ask: "Who is she?" When she made her presence felt, as she promptly did, there arose a fine critical storm with her as the center. Bernhardt was idolized in London, appeared there in the same season, and naturally comparison was rife. As a matter of fact, comparison between Duse and Bernhardt, both of whom were well within their prime in the early nineties, was one of the favorite intellectual amusements of the day, with both professional and amateur critics. Duse succeeded in London, however, as she had succeeded elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

Thus had she swung about the world, making known her great gifts, and firmly establishing a genuine, honestly won fame. Only Paris remained to be conquered, and before she attempted that formidable task, she visited America again.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> She played for London *A Doll's House* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, as well as *Camille*, *Fédora*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *La Locandiera*.

<sup>14</sup> When Duse was in the United States for the second time, in 1896, she withstood, as before, all attempts to interview her. This fact did not prevent some enterprising persons from

Now, at last, came Duse's invasion of Paris. Why was it delayed so long? What were the circumstances of her going? And how did she fare there? The answers to these questions form a curious chapter in her history, and in that of a great sister artist. Duse's few weeks in Paris in the early summer of 1897 mark the climax of her career, and may well be described in some detail.

It is an established tenet of Parisian faith that nothing in the artistic world can really be said to have won the stamp of authentic achievement until it has been seen and approved by Paris. With much justification, surely, the

publishing to the world that she had confessed a dislike of America. The report was widely spread, but the fact was that Duse did not make the statement.

Her Magda gave a new revelation of her skill. "In suggesting the social standing of the returned prodigal, Mme. Duse takes a middle course between the frank Bohemianism of Bernhardt and the loftier aristocratic air adopted by Modjeska. It is interesting to note how she emphasizes the theatrical nature of Magda's past life, by just those little exaggerations of pose and gesture common to nearly all stage performers, but from which she herself, in ordinary conditions is almost ideally free. These manifestations of self-consciousness are confined to the second act, and vanish when the inner self of the woman is brought to the surface by the influence of powerful emotions."—*The Critic*, March 7, 1896. An instance, this, of Duse's remarkable subtlety in acting. At the point where Magda drives her former lover from her presence, she "easily reached and maintained herself at a height of emotion which can only be described as tragic, and she wrought the effect without exposing herself, even for an instant, to the charge of exaggeration or rant." Of this scene William Archer, a little later, said that until he saw it he did not fully realize the dynamic potentialities of human utterance.

French are likely to consider themselves final arbiters, and they do not go out of their way to discover merit in a foreigner who has not yet shown his art in "the home of art."

Paris had heard the echoes of Duse's achievements, then, with the comfortable feeling that if she really amounted to anything she would come to Paris and prove it. Until then Parisians could wait. Duse was known to be the best Italian actress, Dumas' interest in her had been evidenced years before, and her success in the large European cities and in America and England was by no means unknown. But the occasional whisper that Duse was comparable to Bernhardt herself brought only indulgent smiles. The lady evidently avoided the test.

That she had avoided the test was true. Duse had been really afraid to go to Paris. Later, after she had won the day, she admitted as much. A failure in Paris would be, she recognized, a fatal blow to her prestige and ambitions.

When Dumas had urged her to try her fortunes in the French capital, he assumed that she would act in French. But Duse knew how sensitive were French ears to the niceties of the language, how dependent on purity and beauty of speech was much of the drama to which they were accustomed, and how she would be placing herself under a heavy handicap in acting in a strange medium.

It was not, then, until in Austria, Russia, England and the United States she had been

warmly received while acting in her native tongue, that the conquest of Paris began to seem possible.

Enter now, Sarah Bernhardt. Mme. Sarah, unlike most Parisians, had seen Duse and knew her quality. She knew the truth of the growing impression that Duse was really a worthy rival. Therefore, if Duse was really coming to Paris, Sarah wished to involve herself in the proceedings, and protect her position. It was announced that where others had failed to induce Duse to come to Paris, Bernhardt had succeeded. More, she had offered Duse the use of her own theatre. Thus Duse was put at once in the position of *protégée*, and the press resounded with praises of Sarah's magnanimity.

Duse chose *Magda* for her first appearance. It was a part well suited to her, and in it she had less to fear in comparison with Bernhardt, who had never scored so heavily with it as with her other rôles. Bernhardt forthwith called on Duse, and the announcement at once followed that the opening performance was to be changed to *La Dame aux Camélias* (*Camille*). Whatever the honesty of Bernhardt's motives, she had succeeded in inducing Duse to appear first in a part that was one of Sarah's own triumphs. One can imagine the new security that Bernhardt felt.

The house was crowded with the most brilliant audience that Paris could muster. Word had gone forth that one was to appear who had



been mentioned in the same breath with the idolized Bernhardt. Rochefort was there, and so was Halévy, and Got, the *doyen* of the *Française*, and a throng of the distinguished men and women of the Paris of the day. For the critics, Lemaître was there, and Catulle Mendès, and, most important, Francisque Sarcey. Sarah herself was there, holding court, and serene and smiling in her rôle of protecting friend.

The story of that first performance is soon told. It was a disappointment. During the first act Duse was almost painfully nervous; in the second she showed flashes of power, and won some mild enthusiasm; in the third she was listened to only with patience; in the fourth the audience took more pleasure in Ando, her "leading man," than in Duse herself; in the fifth she played the death scene beautifully, but it was too late. "If someone had triumphed it was not Duse."

Already Paris thought that it had taken Duse's measure, and now that the alleged comparison with Bernhardt was disposed of settled back to enjoy her, if possible, for her own sake. *Magda* followed. The critics were a little more impressed. Sarcey in particular—his criticism always appeared after a few days' interval—poured balm on Duse's feelings. He began to see that all had not yet been told. "Everyone," he wrote, "was delighted to see so much naturalness combined with such great force of feeling. . . . I think I am beginning

to distinguish the characteristic traits of her peculiar talent."

After the first performance of *Magda*, Duse had been suddenly taken ill. Immediately after Sarcey's encouraging article—whether or not it was the cause,<sup>15</sup>—she recovered and was ready for the lists again.

Bernhardt grew apprehensive. She proposed a gala performance in aid of the fund for a memorial to Dumas. She announced that she would give the last two acts of *La Dame aux Camélias*, and that Duse had been asked to give the second and third acts of the same play. Now the third act was the point where Duse had most signally failed to please Paris on that memorable first night. She was by now wary of Bernhardt's "friendship," and said that while she was eager to appear in honor of Dumas, she would substitute the second act of *La Femme de Claude*. And on this substitution she insisted in spite of all Mme. Sarah could say.

The audience had anticipated a rare feast of acting and was not disappointed. It applauded both actresses to the echo. But notice how Sarah worked into this occasion an element that had reference not so much to the glorification of Dumas as to the glorification of herself: "The curtain rises to disclose the celebrated bust of Dumas, by Carpeaux, which occupies the center of the stage. Grouped

<sup>15</sup> Unlike many of her sister actresses, Duse made a practice of reading the criticisms of her acting.

about, at a respectful distance, are all the artists who have taken part in the performance, while in advance of all, face to face with the bust itself, stands Sarah Bernhardt. She still wears the costume of Margu rite Gauthier, and is there as the accepted symbol, the unrivaled personification of Dumas' immortal creation. Duse is in the background along with the others.

"A poem has been composed especially for the occasion by Edmond Rostand, in which Bernhardt is allowed to address Dumas in a tone of familiar grandeur, as befits one genius in the presence of another. After one expressive pause, therefore, she changes her attitude and begins.

" 'She recites these exquisite verses [the account in the *Gaulois* said] with a charm of tenderness, an intensity of feeling, that arouse new transports of enthusiasm. The whole audience is on its feet, quivering, with arms outstretched toward the prodigious *artiste*, who makes an effort to bow, but is overcome by the force of her emotion. The curtain rises and falls an incalculable number of times, disclosing the great *trag dienne* in her gracious attitude of homage to the great dramatist. And then, with a movement of touching spontaneity, Sarah goes to La Duse, seizes her hand, and both incline before the bust of the master. The spectacle is one that will never be forgotten.' " <sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> From Victor Mapes' *Duse and The French*, to which the author is indebted for his account of Duse's Paris *d but*.

How very Gallic! And how extremely effective as an apotheosis of Bernhardt! With Duse triumphantly subordinated by means of Bernhardt's apparently magnanimous demonstrations of friendship, and with the Paris season practically at an end, Mme. Sarah left town and repaired to England.

In spite of all, Duse went on. In rapid succession she played *La Locandiera*, *Sogno di un Mattino di Primavera* (a new play by d'Annunzio), *La Femme de Claude*, and *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

A curious thing happened. Her great first-night audience Duse had not been able to overwhelm. Now, by the slow-working influence of her very genuine art, she gained a cumulative hold on the imagination and affection of the Paris public. An open letter to her, signed "Sganarelle," appeared in *Le Temps*, appealing to her to give a final matinée especially for her brother and sister artists to whom "her methods had opened new horizons." "Sganarelle" proved to be Sarcey. His project was taken up with an enthusiasm that told how effective, after all, had been Duse's unobtrusive art. Lavrouniet, in *Figaro*, speaking of Bernhardt and Duse, in a few sentences admirably characterized the art of both. The former, he says, "from a constant desire to be unique, supplies all the highest and rarest expressions of art, except one—simplicity. In La Duse, we have seen on the stage a woman's nature and that of an *artiste* completing each other—the



*artiste* playing with all the sensitiveness of a woman, and the woman allowing herself to be entirely absorbed in the *artiste*." Lemaître also wrote sympathetically: "She came to us, preceded by a European reputation a rival sister of the great Sarah. We were not deceived, for Duse is a dramatic *artiste*, original to the core, and of the first rank. We were told she was beyond everything an astonishing realist; that she lived her parts rather than played them, and in this way took her audience by storm. And that statement is doubtless exact. . . . What seems to me incontestably Mme. Duse's is her singular charm and grace, her sweetness and tenderness. On that account her search for the truth, her solicitude to avoid the exhibition of any artifice, her realism, so very minute and so very sincere, reach even to poetry. Hers is the unique charm of a matured woman,—impassioned, bruised, suffering, nervous,—in whom, however, survives a young and ingenuous grace, almost that of a young girl, of a strange young girl."

Duse promptly and gladly accepted the invitation to give the special *matinée*. Her lease of Bernhardt's theatre had expired and it was necessary to write to England to ask the use of the house. Bernhardt tendered it gratuitously, but, wishing still to have a share in all that was going on, requested that the invitations bear her name and Duse's side by side. Duse saw difficulties. "I could not invite my companions in France to come and admire me.

That would be too presumptuous." When Sarah could not have her way, she suggested that the performance be abandoned. Instead, the *Porte St. Martin* was secured. The newspapers got wind of the negotiations that Duse's manager and Bernhardt had been carrying on by telegraph, and when the latter's motives became apparent, there was another reaction in favor of Duse. There was room in the *Porte St. Martin* for only one-tenth of the applicants for seats, and, when the day arrived, the audience seemed to Sarcey "like a violin whose strings are tightened and ready to vibrate under the bow." "It was the first time," he wrote, "I have seen an audience thus formed and in such a frame of mind. There was no artificial commotion; it was expectation, full of security and joy." Of what followed Jules Huret wrote in *Figaro*: "I am afraid of my incompetence to describe the powerful, the profound emotion of those three hours, where an entire audience composed of the flower of French comedians, of well-known writers, great painters and celebrated sculptors, honored a foreign *artiste* with the most vibrating, the most enthusiastic, the most poignant manifestation that it is possible to witness."

Duse played for them *Cavalleria Rusticana*, the last act of *La Dame aux Camélias*, and the second act of *La Femme de Claude*. Never had she acted better. When the curtain fell "the whole audience rose to its feet, *bravas* and *vivats* thundered through the house, handker-

chiefs and hats were waving, flowers flew from boxes,—‘*Au revoir! Au revoir! Au revoir!*’—and ten times the curtain had to be raised before the smiling actress, who did not attempt to conceal her joy. Then the stage was immediately invaded by the crowd. Some wished only to see her once again; some must embrace her; others asked for a flower from the bunch she held in her hand. During one whole hour the procession did not cease. I saw there young actresses and rising actors, with tears in their eyes, not daring to approach her. Coquelin wishes to act with her just once and begs her to play in French. . . . Mme. Laurent comes also, and slowly, with sober words, expresses her admiration. The Ambassador of Italy and his wife arrive in their turn, and congratulate her with happy faces. And her troupe, who leave to-day for Italy, wait to say good-by. . . . She kisses them, much moved.” Next day Duse was fêted by the *Comédie Française*. What a change was this in a few short weeks! The ending was a fine outburst, of a sort possible only to the Latin races, and it marked the very zenith of Duse’s career.

Such was Duse’s progress from a poverty-stricken, obscure childhood to a place, at the age of thirty-eight, equal, to say the least, that of any actress of her day.

Duse could not fail to find deep satisfaction in her progress from triumph to triumph. But in her case one feels that biographical detail, the accidents of place and date, matter com-

paratively little. She was a curiously detached spirit. "If I had my will," she once told Arthur Symons, "I would live in a ship in the sea, and never come nearer to humanity than that." As it was, she lived only in the realm of her art. She was of infinite natural dignity, a shy, proud woman, always far removed from the petty publicities of theatrical life, like some patrician living her isolated life on a country estate. An utter simplicity and sincerity, the fruits of a fine nature and of "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," attended her always.<sup>17</sup> Her face, pale and typi-

<sup>17</sup> In 1898 Mme. Vivanti Chartres, one of Duse's few intimate friends, said (in the New York *Dramatic Mirror*): "Duse's hatred of publicity and newspaper interviews has assumed the proportions of a mania. . . . When we were alone together, talking of the play I was writing for her, or discussing modern art, her youthful struggles with poverty, or the world weariness that came to her finally with her splendid success, Duse was herself—impulsive, eager, passionate, tender, sad. But the mere announcement of a visitor would freeze her into silent hauteur.

"I stayed with her in Turin for some time. We used to go out driving in the *Valentino* every morning, for Duse said she needed to begin the day by looking at 'green things.' She was crowding the *Teatro Carignano*, the receipts averaging 10,000 francs for each performance—a stupendous sum for Italy. Yes, Duse certainly makes a great deal of money, but she spends all that she makes. She is exceedingly generous. One day she gave a magnificent diamond ring to a dressmaker whom Worth had sent to her from Paris with her *Dame aux Camélias* dresses. And she pays her entire company all the year round, although during the last eighteen months she has given only twenty-two performances.

"At Monte Carlo we stayed at the Victoria, the dullest if most aristocratic hotel in the place. But Duse has a taste for the dismal and the melancholy. She is very sad—the saddest woman I have ever known. She cannot even bear



cally Italian, at once sad and ardent, is the face of a woman who has thoroughly lived, but whose soul is equal to great trials. Her health was never robust,<sup>18</sup> and bodily weakness has often interrupted her work. Her voice was sad, her habit silence, though on rare occasions she is said to talk merrily. Although Duse as an actress and as a woman gives the impression of an all-pervading sadness, of a profound thoughtfulness, "the thoughtfulness of one who comes toward us from a sanctuary of brooding on life's eternal questions," the more amiable and human traits are not wholly lacking in her. She is said to be quick to grasp a joke and to be fond of humorous books. She is extravagant in her delight in flowers. At her country place in Tuscany she has literally thousands of rose bushes.

people's voices. After the strain of her performance she drives home quite alone, and sits down to her supper in solitude and silence. During the days that I was with her we used to sit at opposite ends of the large table, sometimes without exchanging half a dozen words, and she used to laugh her approval across to me when I absolutely refused to answer her if she made any attempts at polite conversation.

"Duse *chez elle* dresses almost always in white satin. Her gowns are loose and limp, and folded carelessly around her. . . . She is a charming woman, highly cultured, sincere, brave and good. Her conversation, when she chooses to speak, is startlingly brilliant."

<sup>18</sup> It was her rule not to play more than four performances a week. When she was in her thirties, the world was told that she was a sufferer from "pulmonary phthisis," and that her impending doom was one of the causes of her seclusion and sadness. All through her career there were periodic reports of her illness, of canceled engagements and interrupted tours.

Of only medium height, she somehow on the stage suggested tallness. Her hair was once of typical Italian jet-blackness, but long ago it turned quite white, and she was forced on the stage to wear wigs; off the stage, she is said to have taken pride in her white hair. For many years she appeared on the stage without "make-up" of any kind, but after about 1900 she found it necessary as a means to the appearance of youth. Among the Italians she was known as "*dalle belle mani*," for her hands were, perhaps, her chief beauty, small and beautifully wrought; and like the Italian she was, she used them expressively and gracefully. Her reticent nature showed itself in her personal tastes. Off stage and on she dressed with great simplicity, and she disliked jewelry.<sup>19</sup>

She became a great reader, and though she never acquired English, Shakespeare was one of her enthusiasms. Maeterlinck was another. Cryptic sciences fascinated her. In modern art, her sympathies were with the symbolists and impressionists. It was not strange that

<sup>19</sup> "She spends enormous sums on books and photographs, on bonbons and *scissors*—a curious hobby of hers, as she buys pair after pair, which she afterwards loses. . . . Another of her fads, which in Italy is a decided novelty, is hygiene; for to the average Italian mind, the simplest rules of health and sanitation, even the combination of warmth and good ventilation, are mysteries, to inquire into which would be useless and ridiculous. That Duse should like to have a fire and to sit with the window open at the same time, quite passes their powers of comprehension." Helen Zimmern in *Fortnightly Review*, 1900.

d'Annunzio, the poet-dramatist-novelist who was making his presence felt in Italy about the time of her Paris triumph, should appeal to her as a kindred spirit. His fiery exaltation of human passions, his undoubted poetic gifts, she took for real genius, and about 1900 the world heard that Duse had forsworn all dramatists else and would act henceforth nothing but d'Annunzio's plays. The poet and the actress formed an association that was plainly more than that of friendship or professional coöperation. That she was passionately devoted to d'Annunzio for some years, and that their friendship was broken by the publication of one of his novels—in which he made literary use of what she considered their sacred alliance—was the talk of Europe. The resulting separation she is said to have taken, as she had her earlier love affair, with tragic seriousness. How much her retirement from the stage was due to this disappointment, and how much merely to advancing age, it is difficult to say.

The d'Annunzio campaign was not a success, even in Italy. His plays were not saved by patriotic interest in the author or by affection for the actress from being thought decadent and undramatic, though everywhere the richness of their poetic strain was recognized. Duse's faith however, until the rupture with d'Annunzio, was unreasoning and unswerving. She came to the United States again in 1902, acting in his plays.<sup>20</sup> She did nothing with them

<sup>20</sup> Her d'Annunzio parts, extending from 1897 to 1902,

to add to the fame she had earlier acquired, though, in spite of d'Annunzio, her acting still retained its freedom from artificiality or exaggeration.<sup>21</sup>

After her return to Europe her appearances became more infrequent. In 1904 she gave a "command performance" at the English court (she had always been popular in England, which received comparatively well even the d'Annunzio plays), and in 1906 she came all the way from Italy to assist in the great testimonial to Ellen Terry. Illness, which assailed her often, and weariness of her work, herself and all things else, kept her from the stage most of the time. She continued, however, to keep her company constantly under salary and at her command, and as late as 1909 it was her custom, when at rare intervals the spirit moved her, to assemble them for brief appearances in the European capitals. Of late years she has given her energy to the founding of a home for aged actors.

By means first of vivid imagining and then

were: Isabella in *Songo di Mattino di Primavera*, Anna in *La Citta Morta*, Silvia in *La Gioconda*, Helena in *La Gloria*, and Francesca in *Francesca da Rimini*.

<sup>21</sup> "In *La Gioconda*, the scene in the studio, when the wife, burdened with a sense of intolerable worry, finds herself face to face with the woman who has supplanted her—would to a second rate actress prove an irresistible temptation to frenzied rant; but Duse plays it with a sustained intensity of controlled detestation and scorn which was infinitely more impressive, more artistic and more true. In the horrible climax she leaves details of her destroyed hand to the imagination." *The Critic*.



by the revealing power of an unobtrusive, lucid art Duse made herself the greatest *artiste* of her day. When the French said she had widened the horizon of her art they paid tribute to what was, after all, something akin to original genius.

“The furthest extremes of Duse’s range as an artist,” wrote Bernard Shaw, who is only one of the critics to give her the foremost place among modern actresses, “must always remain a secret between herself and a few fine observers. I should say without qualification that it is the best modern acting I have ever seen. . . . Duse is the first actress whom we have seen applying the method of the great school to characteristically modern parts or to characteristically modern conceptions of old parts. . . . In Duse you necessarily get the great school in its perfect integrity, because Duse without her genius would be a plain little woman of no use to any manager. . . . Duse, *with* her genius, is so fascinating that it is positively difficult to attend to the play, instead of attending wholly to her. . . . Sarah Bernhardt has nothing but her own charm. . . . Duse’s own private charm has not yet been given to the public. She gives you Césarine’s charm, Marguérite Gauthier’s charm, the charm of La Locandiera, the charm, in short, belonging to the character she impersonates; and you are enthralled by its reality and delighted by the magical skill of the artist without for a moment feeling any complicity either on your own part or on hers in the pas-

sion represented." Shaw did not hesitate to enter into the once popular game of comparing Bernhardt and Duse, and in his estimate Madame Sarah is indeed a bad second. "The French artist's stock of attitudes and facial effects could be catalogued as easily as her stock of dramatic ideas: the counting would hardly go beyond the fingers of both hands. Duse produces the illusion of being infinite in variety of beautiful pose and motion. Every idea, every shade of thought and mood, expresses itself delicately but vividly to the eye. . . . When it is remembered that the majority of tragic actors excel only in explosions of those passions which are common to man and brute, there will be no difficulty in understanding the indescribable distinction which Duse's acting acquires from the fact that behind every stroke of it is a distinctively human idea."

Duse even in her early career, when she was but little more than twenty, had already broken with dramatic traditions.<sup>22</sup> There was a fairly definite Italian tradition which had been made familiar by Ristori and which had been fostered by Salvini. If Duse had been French instead of Italian and if she had undergone the

<sup>22</sup> "Her method does not admit even the possibility of pose. In the quietest and most delicate of her scenes Bernhardt always bears traces of her school and its traditions of *autorité*. Duse on the other hand, goes to the most daring lengths in self-effacement. Her stillness is absolute.

"Even what is exaggerated in Italian gesture has in her a sort of anomalous grace, and preserves the richness and geniality of nature." *The Athenæum*, 1885.

regular training of the *Conservatoire*, she would have met with another tradition, of which at the time Bernhardt was becoming an efficient missionary, imposing its standards even outside of France. Duse in some way escaped all traditions. Her training, such as it was, had been with strolling players and in provincial theatres. What this experience did succeed in giving her was the habit of dramatic expression, a habit that, by the time she had arrived at the age when the usual stage-struck girl becomes an actress, had made her mistress of self-expression, free from self-consciousness. Added to this habit of going directly to the expression of an idea or emotion there was, in Duse's case, besides the sheer womanliness that shone through all her work, the ardent, sympathetic imagination that enabled her to project herself into another personality, sharing its emotions and divining its experiences and actions. When these emotions and these actions reached the stage of expression there was no rigid, school-taught method to hamper her. An ingrained habit of expression, coupled with an illuminating, self-effacing imagination, formed the secret of Duse's famed "naturalness." Most actresses interpret or "portray" a character; Duse became the character itself, transmuted into life in terms of Duse's own mind and spirit, and, as often as not something finer, more noble, more sensitive, than the dramatist's conception. Such a character, with her, was "a figure designed and

modeled beforehand, proportioned, poised, and polished to the finger tips with a sculptor's patient assiduity, and then, by an ever renewed miracle endowed with 'the crowded hour of glorious life' at the electric touch of the artist's imagination." <sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> William Archer.





ADA REHAN



## ADA REHAN

**A**S a superbly alive, radiant personality, Ada Rehan stands out in the memory of any one who has ever seen her. She is of the great line of actresses. She is (or one should say *was*, for Ada Rehan several years ago passed from the stage) more nearly a Woffington, a Terry, than any actress America has yet produced. Like Ellen Terry, she was a miraculous blend of regal force, charm, and thoroughly grounded ability.

Yet "miraculous" is hardly the word, for Ada Rehan labored long and devotedly for the eminence that both America and England accorded her. Hers was no sudden Mary-Anderson-like leap into "stardom," nor did she gain a prominent place on the stage with the comparative ease that seems possible in these days. As we shall see, her apprenticeship was exceedingly long and arduous. In proportion was her radiance, when once she was placed in the map of "stars," for Rehan will be at least a tradition, to be placed with those of Woffington and Terry, when her lesser sisters are long since quite forgotten. She was the supreme embodiment for all time, one feels certain, of Katherine, Shakespeare's Shrew. That part she was

born to play. Her Beatrice, her Rosalind, her Viola were all memorable impersonations; and she played the heroines of old English comedy in a way that again recalled the famous actresses of the past.

Ada Rehan<sup>1</sup> was born in Limerick, Ireland. The fact is rich in significance, for though she was brought to the United States while she was a mere child, and received here all of her stage training, there is no denying the strong Celtic strain in her, the Irish buoyancy and geniality.

The family came to America in 1865,<sup>2</sup> when

<sup>1</sup> The name was really Crehan. Why was it changed? Perhaps because in its original form it was too baldly Irish. Yet Ada's two elder sisters had taken to the stage and both appeared with the name O'Neill. Her mother was Harriet O'Neill, her father William Crehan. There were six children, three boys and three girls. The story used to be current that "Crehan" became "Rehan" through an error of printing; that when Ada first appeared in Philadelphia, with Mrs. Drew, she was named on a playbill "Ada C. Rehan"; and that, in view of the favorable newspaper notices given the new actress, Mrs. Drew advised her to retain the name inadvertently given her,—all interesting surely, and perhaps true. Playbills of the Arch Street Theatre (Philadelphia) of 1874, however, give "Ada Crehan."

<sup>2</sup> The date of her birth has always been given as April 22, 1860. There are reasons for thinking it must have been earlier. It would not be the only instance in which an actress' age has been reduced by a retroactive manipulation of dates. Her first appearances on the stage were in 1873 and 1874, and by the time she went to Daly, in 1879, she had had an extended experience that would be simply marvelous for a girl of nineteen. Her hair began to turn gray about 1894. Mr. Winter says the streaks of gray came prematurely. Of course, they did, in any event, but thirty-four is an extraordinarily early age for such a phenomenon in an actress. An anecdote, not worth repeating, in the *Boston Record* for November 24, 1888, is introduced in this way: "Ada Rehan is forty years old and



Ada was about ten, and settled in Brooklyn. None of her family had ever been on the stage, and she went to school, as any other girl would, quite as if she were never destined to be an actress. The three Crehan sisters must have been a talented, attractive group of girls, however, for both of Ada's elder sisters preceded her to the stage, though neither of them gained a tithe of the repute that was to come to the youngest of the three.<sup>3</sup> When Ada first stepped on a stage, Kate, the eldest, had been on the stage half-a-dozen years, and for four years had been the wife of Oliver Doud Byron, the author and star of *Across the Continent*, a great popular success of the day.<sup>4</sup> One night, when the Byrons were playing *Across the Continent*, in Newark, New Jersey, the actress who played Clara, a small part, was suddenly taken ill. Ada, who up to now had had no idea, no definite

over. She makes up fairly for girlish rôles . . . but at close sight in the cold light of day she shows her age." If worthy of any consideration, this paragraph would place the birth-date before 1850, obviously going to the other extreme. The correct date is undoubtedly 1855, or thereabout. Thus she was about eighteen when, in 1873, she made her first appearance.

<sup>3</sup> The eldest, Kate, "had been a choir singer in Limerick, and while singing at a concert one day in New York was heard by Harvey Dodworth and invited to join the chorus for Lester Wallack's production of the opera of *Don Cæsar de Bazan*. She accepted, and was also joined by her younger sister Hattie, that being the début of the Crehan family upon the stage."

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Byron, the actor, is their son. Harriet, the second sister, had a long and comparatively inconspicuous career on the stage as Hattie Russell. Two brothers, William Crehan and Arthur Rehan, were more or less definitely identified, after Ada's success, with the business side of the theatre.

idea at least, of attempting a stage career, was pressed into service, and played the part that one night, and played it with such confidence and success that a family council straightway determined her fate for her. She was to go on the stage.

This date, 1873, is the first one of great importance in Miss Rehan's stage career. The next came six years later when Augustin Daly engaged her as a member of his company at Daly's Theatre. Theatre, company, manager and "leading woman" there combined to write one of the most brilliant chapters in America's theatrical history.

The record of those six early years after her first appearance, and before she went to Daly, is one of the most amazing industry and progress. She played for a time with the Byrons, and made while with them her first appearance in New York (1873) in a small part in *The Thoroughbred*. Soon she went to Philadelphia for her first regular engagement, as a member of Mrs. John Drew's company at the Arch Street Theatre. John Drew, the younger, the present actor of that name, made his first appearance at about the same time, also in Mrs. Drew's company. Here Miss Rehan remained for two seasons (1873-75) receiving much valuable training, though as yet she played only subordinate parts.

Then came several seasons of "stock"—"stock" according to the old-fashioned system, in which the "stars" wandered from city to city,

finding in each place a company ready to support them in the standard plays and ready to "get up" in new plays at short notice. As many of the "stars" acted in the same plays, the stock company was less like the present day organization so called, which presents a new play each week and then drops it for good, than like a "repertoire company," with a number of plays always thoroughly at its command. The system made for thorough training, as it combined with a wide range of material opportunities for many performances of any given play. The later Daly company, often called a stock company, was really such a repertoire company save that it boasted its own fixed and brilliant "star," Ada Rehan.

After her two years with Mrs. John Drew, Miss Rehan went to Louisville to join the stock company of Macauley's Theatre, where she remained one season (1875-6). If she had remained a few months longer she would have assisted in the *début* there of Mary Anderson.

She followed her year in Louisville with two seasons (1876-8) as a member of John W. Albaugh's company in Albany.<sup>5</sup> Here it was, in December, 1877, while she was playing Bianca in *Katherine and Petruchio*,<sup>6</sup> that Augustin Daly first saw her and observed her exceptional talent.

At the end of her service with Mr. Albaugh she was but twenty-three. And yet she had

<sup>5</sup> While in his employ she appeared also in Baltimore.

<sup>6</sup> Garrick's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

been a regularly engaged professional actress for five years, had played Ophelia to Booth's Hamlet and Lady Anne to John McCullough's Richard III, besides acting at various times Cordelia in *Lear*, Desdemona in *Othello*, Celia in *As You Like It*, and Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, and had appeared not only with Booth and McCullough but with Adelaide Neilson, Lawrence Barrett, John Brougham, John T. Raymond, and many of the other "stars" of the day.<sup>7</sup>

Next, during the season of 1878-79, Miss Rehan was for a brief period in the company of Fanny Davenport. In the course of this engagement a now forgotten play, *Pique*, was acted by Miss Davenport, and Ada Rehan was given the part of Mary Standish. The author of the play was Augustin Daly. When it was given at the Grand Opera House in New York, in April, 1879, Mr. Daly again was struck by the promise of the young actress whom he had seen as Bianca in Albany a year and a half before. Immediately he placed her under his management and gave her the part of Big

<sup>7</sup> In these pre-Daly days Miss Rehan played, besides the Shakespearean parts named, a host of others that it would be tedious and useless to name. Most of them would suggest nothing to a present-day theatregoer. A few that may have some significance are: Esther Eccles in *Caste*, Hebe in *Pinafore*, Lady Florence in *Rosedale*, Lady Sarah in *Queen Elizabeth*, Little Em'ly in *David Copperfield*, Louise in *Frou-Frou*, Marie de Comines in *Louis XI*, Mary Netley in *Ours*, Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*, Queen of France in *Henry V*, Ursula in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Virginia in *Virginius*. There were about ninety in all.



Clémence in his own version of Zola's *L'Assommoir*, which he produced at the Olympic Theatre the following month. It was a small part, she did it well, and within a few weeks was promoted to the part of Virginie. In September of the same year she appeared for the first time on the stage of Daly's Theatre, which was built, oddly enough, on the site of Wood's Museum,<sup>8</sup> where six years ago she had acted her small part in *The Thoroughbred*. It is worth mentioning that the first parts—both in September, 1879—in the long list, literally of hundreds, that she was to act during her twenty years with Mr. Daly were Nelly Beers in *Love's Young Dream*, and Lu Ten Eyck in *Divorce*.

With Ada Rehan the leading woman of the reorganized Daly company there began a new era in her career, in Mr. Daly's, and, it is fair to say, in American acting. Until Mr. Daly's death in 1899 Miss Rehan retained her position, and in that time she progressed from obscurity to the position of one of the leading actresses of her day, famous alike in America and England, and famous even on the continent of Europe. With Mr. Daly's death, though she continued to act and to act well, there passed the period of her peculiar fame, and in a half-dozen years she had ceased to act altogether.

Such, in bald and brief outline, has been Rehan's career. Of the struggles, the aspirations, the triumphs of an actress, of her life, in short, any mere record can tell but little.

<sup>8</sup> On the southwest corner of Thirtieth Street and Broadway.

What sort of woman was Ada Rehan? Well, she was of the royal line of women, regal in her stature, opulent in bodily beauty, gracious and rich in her nature. Her face, like her careless joyousness and exuberant animal spirits, was Celtic. She was not beautiful in the conventional sense, but as with Ellen Terry, simple beauty paled beside her. Her hair was exuberant too, and brown, except where, in the middle of her career, it became streaked with gray. She had the gray-blue Irish eye. "What a great woman she was!" wrote one of her more rhapsodic admirers.<sup>9</sup> "Tall, easy, almost majestic, except that the geniality of her manner took from majesty its aloofness and pride. When she spoke her voice came out melliflently, so that without forcing it seemed to pervade the room. It had something of the quality of a blackbird's note. Ada Rehan is not at all of a classic type of countenance. She is genuine Celtic. To call her pretty would be ridiculous, for prettiness is something that seems to dwindle beside her. To call her beautiful would be neither completely expressive nor apt, for her features have the warp of too many conflicting, irrepressible emotions, and the turn of what one feels tempted to call *rare old Irish humor*. Yet the eyes, and the brow, and the head are beautiful—the eyes especially, with their soft, lamp-like, mellow glow, with their sharp, fiery glints, with their gorgon directness, or again with their innumerable little twinkles

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Lynch, in *Human Documents*.

of fun and sly melting shadows, with the flashing from the lids and the eyelashes of light, or the deep, still beaming that perhaps most eloquently of all speaks of soul." These are high words, indeed, but they had much provocation.

All these things, and more, Rehan appeared across the footlights. Off the stage, simply as Ada Rehan, she was still the exceptional woman. An actress who is capable of diverse and subtle characterizations is often, singularly enough, in her own person a woman of essential simplicity. Such seems to have been the case with Ada Rehan. Her lack of pose can be glimpsed in various ways, in her capacity for pleasure in the success of others, her ability to see and admire beauty and talent in other women,—a severe test for any actress. "She was generous and grateful, and she never forgot a kindness," says Mr. Winter. "Her mind was free from envy and bitterness . . . and she never spoke an ill word of anybody." One more evidence of her simplicity was her un-Bernhardtian sense of contentment in the limited opportunities for personal glorification afforded by her position with Mr. Daly. As we shall see, she refused numbers of offers to star, preferring the comparative obscurity of her position as "Daly's leading woman." Notice the phrases of a writer in the *Sun*, who observed her on the street in New York in 1894, after her return from triumphant appearances in London. "She exhibits a degree of calm serenity that might almost be called matronly. . . . Her face wears a

youthful and almost childish expression. . . . Much of her time has been spent since her return in looking in the shop windows, but apparently she has not purchased much, either here or in Europe, as her attire is invariably that of a woman who devotes little thought to dress!" But this writer goes on to say: "No one would be likely to mistake her for anything but an actress nowadays. Her distinction of bearing is so great that, even if her face were not familiar to the public, a great many people would turn around to look at her a second time as she walks along the street."

Her early education was inconsiderable, and we are told that even during her brief career in school she cared less for her lessons than for romping with her three brothers,—a course that may not have been without its value in preparing her for her success as Katherine and Peggy Thrift. Later, however, she read much. She liked Thackeray, and she particularly admired Balzac. "Her knowledge of human nature,—gained partly by keen intuition and partly by close observance,—was ample, various, and sound," wrote William Winter, who knew her well. "Her thoughts, and often her talk, dwelt upon traits of character, fabrics of art, and beauties of nature, and she loved rather to speak of these than of the commonplaces and practical affairs of the passing day. Her grasp of character was intuitive; she judged rightly, and she was seldom or never mistaken in her estimate of individuals. Her perception was ex-



ceedingly acute, and she noted, instantly and correctly, every essential trait, however slight, of each person who approached her presence. She was intrinsically sincere, modest, and humble—neither setting a great value on herself nor esteeming her powers and achievements to be unusual; she has been known to be in tears, at what she deemed a professional failure, while a brilliant throng of friends was waiting to congratulate her on an unequivocal success.”

Here, as elsewhere, Mr. Winter has poured out his praise with a lavish hand. Yet it is clear that Ada Rehan added many fine qualities, for those who knew her, to those qualities known to all who saw her: vitality, a true sense of comedy, personal charm.

For a long time newspaper interviewers had the greatest difficulty in getting Miss Rehan to talk for them. Like Duse and Mrs. Fiske, she loathed the interview. By nature she was, within the circle of her friends, candid and ingenuous, talking freely, stating frankly her opinions and drawing freely from a fund of interesting anecdotes about the personages she met and knew on both sides of the ocean. It is related that during her first visit to London, she met at a dinner an editor with whom she talked in her characteristic manner. He printed all she said. Though she was of a kindly disposition and had said nothing uncomfortable, she was annoyed by the incident, and for years avoided journalists.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Still, in 1888, when the Daly company was playing in

Daly's Theatre, in the days when Ada Rehan was at the height of her charm and power, was sometimes called "the *Théâtre Français* of America." The leading man was John Drew (who did not become an independent "star" until 1892); the comedian was James Lewis, a talented, intelligent, genuinely comic actor;<sup>11</sup> the "dowager parts" were played by the incomparable Mrs. James Gilbert; and the younger women of the company were Isabel Irving and Kitty Cheatham, both clever actresses, though they paled beside Rehan. At Daly's one saw acting that dispelled any impression of theatricalism. Mr. Daly's rule was rigorous, his standards exacting.<sup>12</sup> He was al-

Paris, several of its members were interviewed, (seemingly about particularly trivial matters) and Miss Rehan was one of the talkers. She was said to have been pessimistic about the wisdom of marriages among actresses, particularly to actors. This is an ever fresh subject for debate. A writer in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, September 15, 1888, wrote a column to refute Miss Rehan's remarks.

<sup>11</sup> "I would go to the theatre any night if only to see him run his fingers over the invisible keys of the sofa cushion."—"Brunswick" in the *Boston Transcript*.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Young, herself a member of Daly's Company, in a talk to the Drama League of Boston in 1914, said: "Mr. Daly was a most polite gentleman, with extraordinary eyes of green, as clear and sharp as they were kind and laughing; wonderful, all-seeing eyes! . . . The strictest discipline reigned everywhere. Every member, with the exception of Miss Rehan, seemed to be in a state of complete terror. Mr. Daly was supreme and held his company of distinguished players with a grip of iron. Rules and regulations were posted everywhere. One or two that I recall were: 'The way to succeed—mind your own business,' and 'How to be happy—keep your mouth shut.' I was amazed to see some of the extra girls hide behind pieces of scenery rather than

together an exceptional manager, scholarly and thorough; and his instructions and advice were of immense benefit to the actors in his company,—a fact that Ada Rehan always freely acknowledged.

The list of parts that Miss Rehan in the twenty years between 1879 and 1899 acted in Mr. Daly's company is simply amazing in its extent and range. We think of her as Katherine, as Viola, Rosalind or Beatrice, but she had been with Mr. Daly several years before the company attempted Shakespeare. Before, there had been a long succession of plays whose

face those remarkable eyes that might be cast their way as Mr. Daly was casually passing from one part of the stage to another. . . . However, to my mind he was a just man, although his temper often caused him to seem to do unjust things. . . . His heart was kind and he could not treasure up a wrong against any one who had once gained his confidence and respect."

C. M. S. McLellan, who nowadays writes "books" for operettas, (and who wrote *Leah Kleschna* for Mrs. Fiske) in 1888 was writing for the *New York Press* what passed for amusing comment on theatrical matters. His chatter about Mr. Daly and Miss Rehan does a little toward characterizing both: "At the stage door you find a bulldog. Mr. Daly secluded himself in a padded room at the end of a secret passage. He comes down to the dog kennel to freeze all reporters. Editors are invited up to the green room. Henry Irving is supposed to be the only man who ever penetrated to the padded chamber, and he tells the story that while he was there Mr. Daly opened a bottle of claret and smiled. The claret part of the story is generally credited, but unless Mr. Irving is degenerating in his choice of words we think there was some mistake about the smile.

"But if any of us ever had doubts concerning the healthfully hilarious influence exerted by Mr. Daly's benignity upon a great comedy company we have only to glance at Miss Rehan and be converted. We have had that baby pout of hers in

names mean nothing to us nowadays. Many of them were adaptations, made by the versatile Mr. Daly himself, from the German. Adaptations from the French, the American, and English stage had seen in plenty; but the German comedies afforded Mr. Daly a comparatively unworked field of which he made the most. One gets a satisfying sense of the essential improvement since 1890 in the art of playwriting in America upon reflecting that these translations and rearrangements of pieces grown on a foreign soil would seem, if presented in our theatres today, peculiarly thin and artificial. Miss Rehan's more discerning admirers regretted the waste of her great talent in them, but then, as now, the theatre had to be made a paying institution in order to exist at all, and these plays indubitably succeeded. The finished acting of the Daly company, admirable both in individual impersonation and in *en-*

opera and in Shakespeare, that imperious, uplifted nose of hers in Jenny O'Jones and Helena, and as the snows of various cycles descend on the heads of her worshipers the musical purr of the Rehan still sings the third sweet song of seven. And when she smiles, the light of pearls and rubies creeps out and illumines the nooks that the calcium cannot penetrate.

"So why should not Mr. Daly live in a padded room and manage the electric buttons that blush all this youth and divine color across a befogged community? He is entitled to padded rooms, bulldogs and cold hands. If he does nothing for the next forty years but keep the crack of doom out of Rehan's purr he will have earned the right to be made Sheriff of New York County."



*semble*, made them one of the keenest of the theatrical pleasures of the day.<sup>13</sup>

Miss Rehan did not at once leap into recognition as the leading American actress of the day. For a long time she was thought of merely as a prominent member of an excellent organization. Gradually, however, by sheer merit, her preëminence became evident. With confidence she undertook all kinds of rôles, and, in the

<sup>13</sup> The list of parts played by Miss Rehan before she began the acquirement of her more famous repertoire cannot, and need not, be made complete here. Some of them were: Isabelle in *Wives*; Cherry Monogram in *The Way We Live*; Donna Antonina in *The Royal Middy*; Psyche in *Cinderella at School*; Muttra in *Xanina*; Selina in *Needles and Pins*; Phronie in *Dollars and Sense*; Thisbe in *Quits*; Tekla in *The Passing Regiment*; Tony and Jenny O'Jones in *Red Letter Nights*; Barbee in *Our English Friend*; Aphra in *The Wooden Spoon*; Floss in *Seven-Twenty-Eight*; Nancy Brusher in *Nancy and Company*, and Etna in *The Great Unknown*.

The more important parts played by Miss Rehan during her twenty years with Mr. Daly were: Baroness Vera in *The Last Word*; Tilburina in *The Critic*; Oriana in *The Inconstant*; Julia in *The Hunchback*; Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*; Miss Hayden in *The Relapse*; Pierrot; The Princess in *Love's Labours Lost*; Valentine Osprey in *The Railroad of Love*; Mrs. Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; Peggy Thrift in *The Country Girl*; Odette in *Odette*; Rose in *The Prayer*; Annis Austin in *Love on Crutches*; Doris in *An International Match*; Thisbe in *A Night Off*; Dina in *A Priceless Paragon*; Mrs. Jassamine in *A Test Case*; Hippolyta in *She Would and She Would Not*; Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*; Rosalind in *As You Like It*; Viola in *Twelfth Night*; Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*; Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem*; Sylvia (and Captain Pinch) in *The Recruiting Officer*; Xantippe in *La Femme de Socrate*; Kate Verity in *The Squire*.

midst of her work, there would occasionally flash forth an impersonation that would seem, what it often was, acting of unique quality.

Rehan was essentially a queen of comedy. Though she attempted from time to time impersonations of a grave and even of a tragic nature, and by virtue of sincerity and womanliness gave them much appeal, she never would have gained her preëminent position by such means. Her range was as wide, however, as the true meaning of the word "comedy," and extended from the graceful performance of the mirthful or sentimental foolery of Daly's adaptations, through the satire of *The Critic* to the farcical comedy of *The Shrew*, the tenderly romantic comedy of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, and the sophisticated "high comedy" of *Much Ado*.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>"Ada Rehan is of a superior race of women. She can be enormously interesting simply standing looking out of a window, her back to the audience, immobile, but with a 'calmness' that sends off vibrations that stir the pulses very curiously, and make her always the magnet, the center. She pauses, but it is the pause of a fine balance of strong feelings. She is all alive; she whirls round and comes into the action with a bold ringing stroke that has been adjudged to perfection. She can stride—not like a man, for she is always a fine woman—but like the daughter of Fingal, the sister of Ossian. She can bang a door like a chord of martial music. She can precipitate herself headlong into a room, and seizing her opponent or her lover, for she is equal to all occasions, at the critical wavering movement, sweep in with a wrestler's power and lift him metaphorically helpless off his feet. Yet in all these displays Rehan is never violent in a narrow way, or streaky, or hard, or wiry. . . . The beauty of repose is delightful in her, the calm musing meditation, and the deep harmonious passion of devotion; so also is the

It is difficult for one who has seen her in the part to think of Shakespeare's Katherine, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, without at once thinking of Ada Rehan. The pride, the majesty, the complete identification with the varying moods of the character, and the humanity she gave to what can easily be made merely a stage figure, were quite irresistible. Perhaps she succeeded so well in this part because it was in many ways a reflection of her own personality.<sup>15</sup>

Her Rosalind, by all accounts, was probably the best, possibly excepting Adelaide Neilson's, that the American stage has seen; her Viola "manifested a poetic actress of the first order." Add to these her Beatrice, her Mrs. Ford, her Helena, her Portia, not to speak of the half dozen heroines of Shakespeare she played before she joined Daly's company, and you have a well rounded accomplishment as a Shakespearean actress, which, if she had done nothing else, would have won her fame.

And she did much else. One of Mr. Daly's

quick salient swerve of emotion wherein the soul is suddenly shaken to its depths by love, by fear, by admiration . . . we find life and flesh and blood throughout, and everywhere the fire of the soul that animates it." Arthur Lynch, in *Human Documents*, London, 1896.

<sup>15</sup> "Playing Katherine brought me much satisfaction, but a very bad reputation for temper," she once said. "I have often been amused at seeing the effect that a first performance of the 'Shrew' in a strange place produced on the employers of the stage. They shunned me as something actually to be feared. During a long run I have heard it said that I hated my Petruchio. I looked upon this as a compliment."

noteworthy departures from the ordinary theatrical routine was his revival of various specimens of old English comedy: *The Country Wife* (in Garrick's version called *The Country Girl*), *The Inconstant*, *She Would and She Would Not*, *The Recruiting Officer* were all Restoration comedies, modified by Mr. Daly to suit modern taste; and *The Critic* was his one-act rearrangement of Sheridan's famous three-act satire of that name. These pieces all involved difficult tasks for a modern actress, for their language is of another time, their feelings of a different civilization. The plays are never professionally revived nowadays; and Mr. Daly's ventures with them succeeded mainly through the conspicuous ability of Miss Rehan to give her characters, whatever their dress or speech, naturalness and vitality.

There was some surprise when Mr. Daly produced Coppée's *The Prayer*, for the usually buoyant Rehan had now to portray a thoroughly serious character. Yet, says Mr. Winter:<sup>16</sup> "No one acquainted with her nature was surprised at the elemental passion, the pathos, and the almost tragic power with which she expressed a devoted woman's experience of affliction, misery, fierce resentment, self-conquest, self-abnegation, forgiveness and fortitude. She did not then, nor at any time, show herself to be a tragic actress, but she evinced great force and deep feeling."

<sup>16</sup> For an enlightening exposition of Miss Rehan's acting in her various rôles see his *The Wallet of Time*, Vol. II.



It further strengthens one's impression of Miss Rehan's really triumphant versatility to read the records of her Lady Teazle, which subtly suggested the country girl within the fine lady; of her Letitia Hardy with "its intrinsic loftiness of woman's spirit"; of her Jenny O'Jones, an irresistibly comic figure done in the spirit of frank farce; or of any of her half hundred impersonations in modern comedy, on which she lavished the spirit, the beauty, the technical proficiency that were always in evidence, whether or not the material she worked with was wholly deserving of her gifts. She was always ambitious, always a patient hard worker, and she never slighted her tasks.

In 1884, when Miss Rehan and the reorganized Daly company had been working together for five years, they made their first visit to London, where they played a six weeks' summer season at Toole's Theatre. London did not take kindly either to Mr. Daly's pieces from the German, which then formed their repertoire, or to Miss Rehan herself, whose style of acting was a surprise to conservative eyes. William Archer wrote in *The World*: "The style of Miss Ada Rehan is too crude and bouncing to be entirely satisfactory to an English audience. She makes Flos a painfully ill-bred young person,—surely not a fair type of the American girl; and her way of emphasizing her remarks by making eyes over the footlights is certainly not good comedy."<sup>17</sup> Clement Scott, on the

<sup>17</sup> On a later visit of the Daly company to London, Mr.

other hand, praised her. No great impression was made, on the whole, but two years later, (1886) when Mr. Daly again took his company to London, Miss Rehan really made a name for herself, although the plays were as yet what seem to us now paltry pieces for such an actress: *A Night off*, and *Nancy and Company*. At this time Mr. Daly offered his company in the English provincial cities and even ventured to present them in Hamburg, Berlin and Paris, where they met some success.

Mr. Daly continued his biennial visit to London. In 1888, after the failure there of *The Railroad of Love*,<sup>18</sup> he offered London its first glimpse of Rehan's Katherine the Shrew. The immediate result was a grand chorus of critical praise, and a remarkable exhibition of public interest. If on her first entrance "she 'took the stage' in a manner that astonished even the oldest playgoer," and if, as one paper said, "Katherines had been seen before, but never such a Katherine as this," it is true that the

Archer chewed and swallowed these words, thus: "‘Crude and bouncing.’ Ye gods! this of the swan-like Valentine Osprey of *The Railroad of Love* and the divine Katherine of *The Taming of the Shrew*! True, it is six years since these lines were written, and Miss Rehan's art may—nay, must—have ripened in the interval. I try to persuade myself that I may not have been so far wrong after all, but it won't do. . . . There must have been beauties in the performance of six years ago to which I was inexcusably blind."

<sup>18</sup> In spite of Clement Scott's praise: "Acting of this kind, so beneath the surface, so distinctly opposed to the commonplace, and so eloquent with finest touches of woman's nature, we do not believe has been seen since the death of Aimée Desclée."

actress herself also "took the stage" in popular fancy. Rehan at home was something of a recluse, but now in London she allowed "society" to pay her its tribute in its own way. She was fêted, and dined, and given a public reception. Different this from her habits in New York, where reading, and walks with her dogs, made up the sum of her leisurely activity. During the 1888 tour Miss Rehan played Katherine at Stratford-on-Avon (where her portrait in that rôle was hung in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre), and in Paris, where Victorien Sardou assisted in her "great triumph."

After another two years, in June, 1890, the company again appeared in London, and this time, in the estimation of the critics, her Rosalind—"a Rosalind who is a very woman, and never an actress!"—surpassed even her Katherine.

From now on the trips to London became more frequent and it soon became part of Mr. Daly's programme to complete each season with a few months in the English capital. He built there his own theatre, and it was Ada Rehan who laid its corner-stone.<sup>19</sup> She visited Tennyson, who read to her his play *The Foresters*, which Daly later produced with Miss Rehan as Marian Lea.

In June, 1893, the new Daly's Theatre was completed, and the company deserted America for more than a year to go to London to es-

<sup>19</sup> October 30, 1891.

tablish the success of the new house. It was dedicated by Miss Rehan's performance of the *Shrew* on June 27. *The Foresters*, *The School for Scandal* and *The Country Girl* followed, and then in January, 1894, she acted for London her *Viola*, which was new to her repertoire. Again a triumph, for *Twelfth Night* ran for one hundred and eleven performances. And again Miss Rehan consented, as still she had never done in New York, to indulge in the life of society.

It was when she returned this time—after spending the summer of 1894 wandering about the Continent—that Miss Rehan became, for the first time, a “star” in her own right. Miss Rehan's loyalty to the Daly company—or at least her steadfastness in refusing to be weaned away from it—was rather remarkable. When the opportunity was offered her to appear as a “star” and not merely as a member, drawing a fixed salary, of Mr. Daly's company, she at first refused. Finally she consented to a brief tour, to supplement her usual work with Mr. Daly. Again, while she was abroad she had received an offer from Possart to appear with him at his theatre in Munich, another from Blumenthal, a third from Sarah Bernhardt, and still another from a syndicate in London to manage and head a company there. In New York, one of Mr. Daly's rival managers offered her “backing” as a “star” to the extent of \$50,000. Miss Rehan refused all these offers, and remained content as leading woman of the



Daly stock company. Even now the independent tour was limited to ten weeks; then she returned to New York and her usual duties.<sup>20</sup>

In 1897 Mr. Daly sent Miss Rehan and his company on another English tour. Beginning (on August 26) with a performance of *As You Like It*, at Stratford-on-Avon, on the sward of the Shakespeare Memorial (of which Miss Rehan was made one of the life governors) they proceeded to the larger provincial cities, as far as Glasgow and Edinburgh, playing *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The School for Scandal*, and *The Last Word*. The results of the tour were all Mr. Daly could have hoped. Miss Rehan, as Katherine, in particular, swept all before her.

It was during this English visit that George Bernard Shaw, then dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, wrote that he never saw Miss Rehan act without burning to present Mr. Augustin Daly with a delightful villa in St. Helena. He thought Mr. Daly was wasting Miss Rehan's

<sup>20</sup> She began her first "starring" tour at the Hollis Street Theatre, Boston, (on September 24, 1894) where many interesting events have taken place. Here Julia Marlowe, six years before, had won her first really genuine recognition. The Hollis Street Theatre was first opened in 1885, and is still often referred to as the best-equipped theatre (on the stage) in the country. It was built in the site of the old Hollis Street Church, where John Pierpont, grandfather of John Pierpont Morgan, and Thomas Starr King preached. The walls of the church building of 1808 were incorporated in the theatre. The opening attraction was *The Mikado*. In the course of its run of twenty weeks Richard Mansfield appeared as Ko-Ko.

rare talent, just as that other rare talent, Miss Terry's, was wasted by her enmeshment at the Lyceum. "Mr. Daly was in his prime an advanced man relatively to his own time and place," wrote Mr. Shaw. "His Irish-American Yanko-German comedies, as played by Ada Rehan and Mrs. Gilbert, John Drew, Otis Skinner and the late James Lewis, turned a page in theatrical history here, and secured him a position in London that was never questioned until it became apparent that he was throwing away Miss Rehan's genius. When, after the complete discovery of her gifts by the London public, Mr. Daly could find no better employment for her than in a revival of *Dollars and Cents*, his annihilation and Miss Rehan's rescue became the critic's first duty." Mr. Shaw's predilection for the psychological, realistic modern play led to his irritation with Miss Rehan's labors, as with Miss Terry's, and even to some doubt as to whether she was a creative artist or a mere virtuosa. "In Shakespeare she was and is irresistible. . . . But how about Magda?" Yet, with unwonted complaisance, Mr. Shaw also says, "I have never complained; the drama with all its heroines levelled up to a universal Ada Rehan has seemed no such dreary prospect to me; and her voice compared to Sarah Bernhardt's *voix d'or*, has been as all the sounds of the woodland to the clinking of twenty-franc pieces." And again, "Her treatment of Shakespearean verse is delightful after the mechanical intoning of Sarah Bernhardt.

She gives us beauty of tone, grace of measure, delicacy of articulation: in short, all the technical qualities of verse music, along with the rich feeling and fine intelligence without which those technical qualities would soon become monotonous. When she is at her best, the music melts in the caress of the emotion it expresses, and thus completes the conditions necessary for obtaining Shakespeare's effects in Shakespeare's way."

The memorable part of Ada Rehan's career was now about to close. Before Mr. Daly's death in 1899 she added to her long list of impersonations Roxane in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Lady Garnet in *The Great Ruby*, but none of these brought her any added fame. Augustin Daly died, in Paris, in June, 1899, and the great chapter in Rehan's life ended. Subsequently she was the star of companies organized for her by new managers, and in 1900 she appeared in a new play, *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*, in which she impersonated one of her famous predecessors, Nell Gwynn.

In the spring of 1901 Miss Rehan suddenly ended her tour in this play, and sailed to Europe, there to repair her broken health by living for awhile at her bungalow on the coast of the Irish Sea. She had been more or less ailing all the season, and the loss of her mother in January, 1901, added to her troubles. In 1903-04 she acted with Otis Skinner as a "co-star" in plays from her old repertoire, *The*

*Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merchant of Venice* among them. One more season she played, 1904-05, this time with Charles Richman as her chief support, and then, on May 2, 1905, she appeared on the stage for the last time, when she took part in the farewell to Modjeska at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. Rehan herself has never had such a testimonial, though she deserved one as richly as the great Polish actress. Unostentatiously she entered her profession, so she pursued it, and so she left it, slipping out of public life so quietly that many playgoers were half consciously expecting her reappearance years after she had quit the stage for good. But she can have, as long as she lives, the reward of as genuine a success as can come to any actress. And it is also not beneath notice that she accumulated a fortune. Like Lotta Crabtree, Ada Rehan took good care of her money. In 1891, when she had been in Mr. Daly's company twelve years, she was "worth something like \$300,000." "She owns," says a contemporary account, "a \$30,000 house in New York, possesses mortgages on adjoining property, and holds almost enough stock in a New Jersey railroad to entitle her to the position of director. She is not extravagant in anything except her love for dogs."

Of dogs, and other animal pets, she was fond. She had a monkey, which Mr. Winter, with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm, described as "an interesting creature of its kind"; and she had, wherever she traveled, a dog or two. "I have



seen her wandering with her dog," says Mr. Winter "on the broad, solitary waste of the breezy beach that stretches away, for many a sunlit mile, in front of her sequestered cottage on the Cumberland shore of the Irish Sea. She was never so contented, never so radiant, never so much herself, as in that beautiful retreat. . . . There, encompassed by associations of natural beauty and of historic and poetic renown, and surrounded by her books, pictures, relics, music, and her pets, she was happy."

Ada Rehan still lives, but, her work done, she remains out of the public eye. She never appears in the public print. She is not yet an old woman, and has many years to enjoy the memories of as true a triumph as an actress can have. For by her exceptional, regally endowed equipment and her devotion to her art, she upheld the gospel of the actress,—poetry, beauty, life.

## MARY ANDERSON

**T**HOUGH a stage career was inevitable for her, Mary Anderson did not come of theatrical people. Her father, who died when she was four, was of English birth and Oxford education, and as he was a personally charming man of artistic tastes and devoted to books and the drama, it was undoubtedly from him that she derived much of her temperamental equipment for her work. Her mother, Marie Antoinette Leugers, was a Philadelphian of German parentage, one of a large family rigorously trained in the Catholic faith. Pious books, and not plays, formed the mental food of that household, and the children were forbidden to enter the theatre. The young Marie had been but little outside this austere circle when she met and loved the also youthful Charles H. Anderson, who then lived in New York. Opposition to the match was natural, as young Anderson was not only not a Catholic but was looked on by Marie's parents as one of the worldly. He seems to have been a thoroughly estimable young man, however, who was merely not of their stamp. When the young couple were forbidden to see each other, it did not take long for a secret correspondence to



MARY ANDERSON





lead to an elopement. Anderson was apparently of some means. He and his young wife, then but eighteen, spent a leisurely year in New York and Philadelphia, and in 1859 went by sea to California. In Sacramento, at the Eagle Hotel, on July 28, 1859, was born their daughter. She was given almost her mother's name—Mary Antoinette Anderson. The young mother, it will be remembered, was of a German family. It is perhaps not too fanciful to think that the beauty of Mary Anderson, which was later the treasured boon of two countries, was in part noticeably Teutonic and traceable to her mother. But this beauty did not manifest itself at once. The babe was red and ugly, in the manner of babes, and the still childlike mother was a week or so in reconciling herself to her child's unpromising aspect. Then, however, also as usual, it was clear to her that there never was such another baby.

The mother's family had never forgiven her for her marriage. When, therefore, her husband was called to England, she took her year-old Mary, and in 1860 moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where her uncle was the pastor of a suburban German Catholic congregation. This Pater Anton was a remarkable man. Born and educated in Germany, he lived in Rome ten years, and then in Texas. Learned and eloquent, striking in appearance, kind and simple, he was a great favorite with old and young. He was soon to be a necessary guardian of the little Anderson family, for Charles Anderson,

who had returned from England and was an officer in the Confederate army, died in 1863, still under thirty. Mary was not yet four, and her little brother Joseph had been born but a few months. It became the plan of the good Pater Anton to train little Joseph as his medical assistant, and Mary he thought some day might be his housekeeper, his helper with the poor, his assistant with the choir, and his organist. How different this from the career she was actually to have!<sup>1</sup>

When Mary was eight her mother was married again, to Dr. Hamilton Griffin, who had been a surgeon-major in the Confederate army. He was to become, during Mary's later career, her wise guide and her business manager.

At the time of this marriage Mary was sent for the first time to school. She was taken to the Convent of the Ursulines, near Louisville. She was not at all a diligent student. She developed early a liking for music, which with a little German was about all she could bring herself to study. It is clear that, with a likable nature and a good disposition, she was still somewhat of a problem for the good nuns who were her teachers. At first she was utterly

<sup>1</sup> Mary Anderson was the child of a devout Catholic mother, her brief period of schooling was in Catholic schools, her beloved Pater Anton was of course a strong influence for her adherence to that faith, and, throughout her public life and since, her devotion to her church has been constant and earnest. One of her friends (Henry Watterson) expressed the conviction that to her religion she owed much of the fortitude that carried her through the ordeals and failures of her career.

homesick,<sup>2</sup> but after a term or so she began to like the convent. Then her serious sickness with a fever kept her at home, but after a year's rest she began school again, this time at the Presentation Academy, a day school. In reading she stood at the head of her class, but she was indifferent to her other studies and was continually punished for not knowing her lessons. Mary Anderson, on whom thousands were later to gaze as she stood, as Galatea, on the statue's pedestal, long before had practice when she stood in the corner with a book balanced on her head, or sat on the dunce-stool; this second punishment she positively liked for she could "see the girls better, and the seat was so much more comfortable than the hard benches."

The little Mary Anderson of that day was a high-spirited girl,<sup>3</sup> keenly intelligent in spite of

<sup>2</sup> "The convent was a large, Italian-looking building, surrounded by gardens and shut in by high, prison-like walls. That first night in the long dormitory, with its rows of white beds and their little occupants, some as sad as myself, my grief seemed more than I could bear. The moon made a track of light across the floor. A strain of soft music came in at the open window; it was only an accordion, played by someone sitting outside the convent wall; but how sweet and soothing it was! The simple little melody seemed to say: 'See what a friend I can be! I am music sent from heaven to cheer and console. Love me, and I will soothe and calm your heart when it is sad, and double all your joys.' It kept saying such sweet things to me that soon I fell asleep, and dreamed I was at home again. From that moment I felt music a panacea for all my childhood's sorrows."—Mary Anderson, *A Few Memories*.

<sup>3</sup> While a mere girl, Mary learned to ride a horse. Twice a year a visit was made to an Indiana farm. She learned

indolence in school, who better than study liked acting childish plays with her baby sister and brothers. One night, when she was twelve, she heard for the first time the name of Shakespeare and heard *Hamlet* read. It marked the beginning of an epoch in her life. For days she could think of nothing but *Hamlet* and the wonderful book which had "suddenly become like a casket filled with jewels." A few nights later she entered her surprised family circle wrapped in a cloak and reciting a garbled version of one of Hamlet's speeches. From then on Shakespeare was her constant companion and inspiration. About the same time she saw her first play—*Richard III*. Impressed and delighted with this and other plays, she gradually became a less forgetful and mischievous and a much more thoughtful little girl. She and her brother would go to the Saturday matinées, arriving hours before the performance for the pleasure of merely being in the land of enchantment as long as possible.

When Mary was fourteen Edwin Booth came to Louisville. Here was a turning point in her life. After seeing him in *Richelieu*—the first great acting she had seen—she spent a sleepless night, her brain teeming with her impressions of his art and with disturbing thoughts

to ride spirited horses without saddle or bridle. Riding was always her favorite amusement. Long afterwards, in London, a riding-master once said to her: "Why, Miss Handerson, you 'ave missed your vocation. What a hexcellent circus hactor you would 'ave made! I'd like to see the 'orse as could throw you now."



as to her own destiny. She then and there decided on a stage career, and resolved to study and to train herself. She kept her object a secret, but made a bargain with her mother whereby she promised to study diligently if allowed to do so at home, for school had become unendurable. The mother accepted, for Mary could at least do no worse than she had at the Academy. Now began a course of self-instruction in Mary's little room at the top of the house. Not only did she make better progress than ever in the ordinary branches, but she carefully trained her own voice, worked hard to overcome a natural awkwardness by fencing and other exercises, and, above all in her own mind, she memorized parts—Richard III, Richelieu, Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*, and the Joan of Arc of Schiller. One evening she astonished her mother and Dr. Griffin with a scene from *The Lady of Lyons*. Especially was her stepfather impressed with the power which Mary had suddenly revealed. At his solicitation an actor from the local theatre called to hear her read. This Henry Wouds was in turn enough impressed to speak of the young Miss Anderson to Charlotte Cushman, in whose company he soon afterward acted. He sent word that Miss Cushman would like to see the young aspirant and hear her read. So Mrs. Griffin reluctantly allowed herself to be persuaded to take her daughter to Cincinnati, where Miss Cushman was playing. The hearing took place in the great actress's hotel.

Richelieu and Joan of Arc were the parts selected. When the trial was over, Miss Cushman, somewhat to the mother's dismay, not only took Mary's career as an actress for granted, but thought it possible for her to begin, not as usual at the bottom but, with a little more training, in parts of importance. She counseled a course of lessons from George Vandenhoff, a veteran New York teacher of stage technique.

At this point Mrs. Griffin's thorough interest and sympathy were won. She and Mary went to New York, and the short term of ten lessons of an hour each was undergone, not with entire comfort for Mary, for her teacher found it constantly necessary to repress her enthusiasm and crude excess of vigor. The lessons were beneficial, however (they were the only formal training in stage work Mary Anderson ever had), and she returned to Louisville and her attic stage with unabated ambition. With no one but her mother to guide her, Mary bent laboriously to her task, renouncing all else. A year of this, and she began to be discouraged, for there seemed to be no prospects of actual appearance. Then John McCullough came to Louisville. As one of the most distinguished actors of that day, his opinion and approval of Mary was sought by the thoroughly enthusiastic Dr. Griffin. McCullough came reluctantly to the Griffin home, openly skeptical as to the beginner's claim to attention, and determined to stay but a quarter

of an hour. He stayed for several hours, acted with Mary scenes from all the plays she knew, called frequently thereafter to act Shakespeare with her, and ended by introducing and recommending her to Barney Macauley, manager of the Louisville Theatre, as an actress of great promise.

It was this manager who gave Mary her first opportunity to appear on a real stage. Casually calling with Dr. Griffin at the theatre one day, Mary was astonished and delighted to be asked to play Juliet at a special performance, but two nights later. She knew the part well, joyfully accepted, and literally ran home to tell the news to her mother. The published announcement ran as follows:

Saturday evening, November 27, 1875, Miss Mary Anderson, a young lady of this city, will make her first appearance on any stage as Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; Milnes Levick as Mercutio, and a powerful cast of characters.

There was but one rehearsal, on the day before; and on this occasion Mary's ideals suffered their first severe blow. The other actors regarded her as an unpromising, awkward upstart, and were markedly unhelpful and even hostile.

At this time she was sixteen; the train of her gown was the first she had ever worn; she had never before faced a real audience from a real

stage; she had had but one imperfect rehearsal with her fellow actors; yet she roused the house to genuine enthusiasm. This cordial reception was partly due to the first appearance of a townswoman, and her impersonation was certainly not without its crudities; yet the newspaper accounts of the evening contain such comments as these: "We are sure that last night saw the beginning of a career which will shed radiance on the American stage"; "Her achievement last night may be fairly classed as remarkable"; "With but little further training and experience she will stand among the foremost actresses." The audience was thrilled by her rich and powerful voice, and impressed by her beauty and vigor.<sup>4</sup>

Mary Anderson's career was thus suddenly and on the whole auspiciously begun. It was the old story of being prepared when the opportunity presented itself.<sup>5</sup> After waiting three

<sup>4</sup> One who was present told William Winter "that notwithstanding the conditions inseparable from youth and inexperience, it was a performance of extraordinary fire, feeling and promise. Its paramount beauty, he said, was its vocalism. Miss Anderson's voice, indeed, was always her predominant charm. Certain tones of it—so thrilling, so full of wild passion and inexpressible melancholy—went straight to the heart, and brought tears into the eyes."—*Other Days*.

Throughout her career all observers noted the richness and expressiveness of Mary Anderson's voice, especially its thrilling lower tones. After she retired from the stage, indeed, she paid considerable attention to singing, and once sang in public, in a small way, for charity.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Watterson, the journalist of Louisville and one of Miss Anderson's earliest friends and advisers, tells this story to indicate the self-reliance that was the cue to her success:



months, during which she learned new parts, she was offered a week at the Louisville Theatre, in which she was to act, besides Juliet, Bianca in *Fazio*, Julia in *The Hunchback*, Evadne in the play of that name, and Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*. This week was a disappointment, for the Louisville public did not turn out in the numbers anticipated to see their young actress. But in the week in St. Louis which soon followed she was moderately successful. Then came two weeks in New Orleans. Miss Anderson's reputation had not reached so far, and the house had to be heavily "papered" the first night to insure a respectably sized audience. The business steadily improved, however, and by the end of the two weeks her success was almost overwhelming,<sup>6</sup> coming as it did in a strange city and on the heels of moderate fortune at home. The students of the Military College showered her with flowers, she was made an honorary member of the famous Washington Artillery Battalion, and as she rode away from the city in the special car which

"On one occasion, after a long discussion, the counselor whom she had sought, quite worn out with his failure to convince her, exclaimed with some irritation: 'Don't you know that I am double your age, and have gone over all this ground, and can't be mistaken?' 'No,' she coolly replied, 'I don't know anything I have not gone over myself.' She considered everything that was relevant, consulted everybody who could give information, and decided for herself."

<sup>6</sup> It was during this engagement, that the young actress played for the first time the character of Meg Merriles, thus, perhaps unwisely, challenging comparison with Charlotte Cushman, who had made the part peculiarly her own.

the railroad had placed at her disposal, Generals Beauregard and Hood and other distinguished Southerners were at the station to bid her farewell.

But if the New Orleans engagement was little less than a triumph, her next important venture, in San Francisco, was nothing more than a disaster. It is an example of the heart-breaking trials that come to the most successful actors that Mary Anderson, phenomenally fortunate so far, failed dismally in San Francisco with both public and press. The engagement was at John McCullough's theatre, and it was only on the last two nights that she made the anticipated favorable impression. Much of this trouble originated with the indifference or worse of her fellow actors, the members of the resident stock company. In those days a traveling "star," instead of taking with him on his tours his own company, as at present, went practically alone and depended for support on the permanent stock company in each town—a system which did not make for artistic excellence, and which often gave occasion to just such jealousy and hostility as helped to make Mary Anderson's stay in San Francisco unhappy. There was one bright spot, however. Edwin Booth was in the city, and she met him for the first time. When she was tempted to quit the stage disheartened, he said to her: "I have sat through two of your performances from beginning to end—the first time I have done such a thing in years—and I have not

only been interested but impressed and delighted. You have begun well. Continue, and you are sure of success in the end." The words were of immense encouragement.

There followed a tour of the South. In contrast to the venture in the state of her birth, Miss Anderson was successful everywhere. She grew fond of the South and made in Washington and elsewhere several of those friendships for which her career was noteworthy. There was a quality in Mary Anderson that attracted and held the interest and affection of the people best worth knowing. In Grant she found a modest simplicity which she greatly liked; in Sherman, a hearty personality and an interest in what directly interested her—the stage. General Sherman was a good enough friend, indeed, to consider himself entitled to correct the growing girl's tendency to stoop, and her illegible handwriting.

Still in her 'teens, Mary Anderson was by now firmly established in her chosen profession. The period just past had been full of discouragements and difficulties, as well as triumphs. Plunging as she did, without any training to speak of, at once into the impersonation of leading parts was an ordeal bound to result in occasional failure. She afterwards said that she would not wish her dearest enemy to pass through the uncertainties and despondencies of these early years—circumstances which she left out of account on that sleepless night after seeing Booth in *Richelieu*. She had come through

the San Francisco ordeal, which was enough to crush the spirit of a girl of seventeen. She still suffered from want of systematic training, she was still painfully conscious of the crudities of her own work, and she lacked even the experience of seeing others in the rôles in which the public compared her with tried favorites. She had seen Charlotte Cushman as Meg Merri-les, but as for Juliet, Evadne and Bianca, her own feelings had been almost her sole resource. Like that of Fanny Kemble and Garrick, her novitiate, had, after all, been extraordinarily brief.

There followed extensive tours which took her throughout the South and Middle West, to Canada and finally to the goal of American actors, the larger Eastern cities, Philadelphia, Boston, New York. In New York she profited by the expert advice of Dion Boucicault and William Winter, and the friendship of her elders in the profession—Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson and Clara Morris. In Boston she formed another of her invaluable friendships—with Longfellow. The old poet and the young girl-artist delighted in each other's company and after her engagement was over, they went several times to the opera together. Her professional success in the Eastern cities was such that she could now feel that the ordeal was passed—that she had attained fame. Not that she was by any means universally admired and approved; a part of the public and some of the critics were not won over. Such, while ad-



mitting her beauty and her promise, suspected her success. It was, they said, too triumphant, too easy. Yet the undoubted fact was that she had won her public. The Boston engagement was unmistakably successful and in New York she enjoyed a "run" of six weeks.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It does Mary Anderson nothing but credit to point out that at the time she was first claiming the attention of the East she had not yet grown to be quite the Mary Anderson the world remembers. She was already beautiful, but she was as yet a comparatively friendless, inexperienced young girl, ignorant of much of the art of the theatre and with undeveloped taste in dress; yet self-confident and perhaps just a bit spoiled. The manager of the theatre at which she played her first engagement in New York (in November, 1877) long afterward remembered its details. On the opening night "there was about three hundred dollars in money and a good paper house. Never was a Pauline attired in such execrable taste. The ladies of the audience could not conceal their smiles; but in the cottage scene Miss Anderson's fine voice and her beauty captured everybody. Other plays followed. As Parthenia she looked a picture in her simple costume, and her manner of saying 'I go to cleanse the cup' enchanted the audience. As Bianca in *Fazio* she wore modern costumes, and but for her youthful beauty would have been absurd.

"On the first night, after the performance, I started home for supper, when it occurred to me that perhaps Miss Anderson would like something to eat after her hard work. So I called at Dr. Griffin's rooms in West Twenty-eighth Street and found the future Queen of Tragedy eating a cold pork chop as she sat on a trunk. The whole party accepted my invitation and we went to the nearest restaurant. On our way we passed a candy store and Mary looked so longingly at the window that I asked whether she would like some candy. 'Oh, yes!' she cried, and jumped up and down on the pavement with pleasure. She selected a pound of molasses cream drops and commenced to eat them at once. The supper began with oysters on the half shell. To see Mary Anderson eat oysters and candy alternately was terrible; but a handsome girl may do anything unrebuked.

"The papers were very kind to Miss Anderson during her

When she was nineteen Mary Anderson went abroad, not to appear professionally, but for a vacation. In England she went the round of conventional sight-seeing, much like any other tourist, but in Paris she saw something of the French theatre and its actors. Herself accustomed to the broad effects in acting, she was at first disappointed by the restraint and *finesse* of the French method. Bernhardt, then in her early prime, received her cordially, saw much of her, and even invited her to play Juliet in Paris; but Miss Anderson, commendably conscious of her own as yet imperfect technique, declined. Now a privileged visiting artist behind the scenes of the *Comédie Française*, she recalled the days, not many years before, when she and her small brother felt so privileged when allowed to sit before the curtain of the old theatre in Louisville. Ristori, another great actress, was friendly to Miss Anderson; but her greatest pleasure she found in the treasures of the Louvre.

She returned to America refreshed in spirit and broadened in outlook. She was now in her twentieth year. One of the recognized stars of the day, her name and her acting became in-

first engagement. She made a success of youth and loveliness; but the public did not rush in to see her.

"After a while, Henry Watterson, who had known her in Louisville, came to town and took an interest in her. He brought with him ex-Governor Tilden, who was taken behind the scenes to be introduced to the new star. He whispered to me, 'What a remarkably handsome girl! No actress, but how very handsome!'"

creasingly familiar.<sup>8</sup> There came invitations from various English managers to appear in London, but Miss Anderson did not yet feel ready to face such a test of her powers. She contented herself with starring tours which took her here and there in the United States and Canada. The artistic success of these years was a varying quantity. As we shall see, she never succeeded, in some eyes, in attaining great heights. For herself, she felt that her work had accomplished some good, that her dream of early girlhood was to a degree fulfilled. One great satisfaction was that she was often assured in letters from young men and women that her Ion or Evadne or Parthenia had helped them over crises of despondency and temptation. It speaks well for her nobility of nature that in such tributes she found her most gratifying applause. She had no reason to be dissatisfied with her measure of success. Yet stage life had already begun in some ways to be distasteful to her. She disliked the constant travel; she sadly missed the home comforts at the command of the humblest in her audiences; the lack of ideals in those with whom she had to

<sup>8</sup> Her repertoire at this time (1879) was: Bianca in *Fazio*; Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*; Lady Macbeth (the sleep-walking scene); Parthenia in *Ingomar*; Berthe in *The Daughter of Roland*; Julia in *The Hunchback*; Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*; Meg Merriles in *Guy Mannering*; Evadne in *Evadne*; Duchess of Torrenuera in *Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady*; Ion in *Ion*; soon afterwards she added the Countess in Knowles' *Love*, Galatea in *Pygmalion and Galatea*, and Desdemona in *Othello* (once only).

work was often a keen disappointment; and above all she was acquiring a keen distaste for the extreme publicity of stage life—the necessity of constantly submitting herself to the public gaze. She began to long for the quiet of domestic life, but the die was cast; it was too late to alter the tenor of her life, and she bent all her energies toward success in a new opportunity that presented itself.

This was an invitation that came when she was twenty-four, to act in London, at Henry Irving's own theatre, the Lyceum. Henry E. Abbey had taken the house for eight months and relied upon Miss Anderson to keep it open all that time—a formidable task for an American actress new to London. She was extremely apprehensive as to the outcome. Arriving in England in the summer of 1883, she passed some time quietly in the country before going up to London. Rural England charmed and rested her. At Stratford she studied her Shakespeare in Shakespeare's own house, and spent many happy hours in the scenes familiar to the poet so long her idol. She arrived in London three months before the date of her first appearance. She faced the greatest trial of her career with a foreboding that was not decreased by seeing the great acting of Irving and Terry. When she chose *Ingomar* for the opening bill, she heard predictions of failure on every hand—the play had not been seen in London for years and was called old-fashioned and stilted. But Miss Anderson had wisely



followed the sound advice of William Winter in choosing Parthenia for her first London part, as she thereby avoided awkward and possibly unfriendly comparison with English favorites.

When the opening night came the thought that almost on the scene of the triumphs of Siddons, Garrick and Kean she was to venture before a strange audience, filled her with dread. She found in her dressing-room flowers from actor friends and telegrams from Booth, McCullough, Lawrence Barrett, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and other cordial well-wishers. When she made her first entrance she was greeted with the longest and heartiest burst of applause that she had ever received. The first scenes past, and her apprehension and despondency somewhat allayed by such encouraging cordiality, her feelings made it difficult for her to speak loudly. A kindly voice from the pit called out, " Mary, please speak up a bit! " Her nervousness then fled, and by the time the play was over it was plain that Mary Anderson had scored a brilliant success. Her youth and beauty, her admirable vigor, and her eight years of patient, hard-working acquirement of her art, had their reward. The Lyceum was crowded nightly, and Mr. Abbey, who was prepared to close the theatre in case the venture was a failure, kept it open for eight months. There were a few weeks of *Ingomar* and *The Lady of Lyons* and then for the remaining time *Pygmalion* and *Galatea*. On one of the first

nights the Prince and Princess of Wales asked to be presented to the actress.

During the first months of her stay in London she made her home—with her mother and stepfather, who were with her constantly—in Maida Vale, a secluded spot where she was free from intrusion and noise. She made many quick expeditions to scenes made famous by Dickens, and went again to Stratford. After a while, however, she moved to a larger house in Kensington, and here London society, at its best, began to find her out. As in America, the choicest spirits seemed naturally to gravitate toward her. To her informal Sunday afternoon receptions came artists, literary men, and statesmen. The “little bent figure with its great kind heart” of the novelist Wilkie Collins became familiar; Alma-Tadema, the artist, was another; W. S. Gilbert of Gilbert and Sullivan, and author of *Pygmalion and Galatea*, naturally took a personal interest in that play, and wrote for Miss Anderson a new “curtain-raiser” for it, *Comedy and Tragedy*. Browning she frequently met and he seemed to her more like one of the old-school Southern gentlemen than a mystic poet. Either during this first season or the next she numbered among her friends Mrs. Humphrey Ward, James Russell Lowell, then American ambassador, Edmund Gosse, Lord Lytton, the artist Watts, Gladstone, the novelist William Black, Cardinal Newman, and Tennyson. She enjoyed to the full the art galleries of Lon-

don, the opportunities to hear the best music, and all the various activities and interests which make London the capital of the English-speaking world.

Mary Anderson's success in London was duplicated when she appeared elsewhere in the British Isles. She was enthusiastically received in Edinburgh and in Manchester. In Dublin, the good-natured crowd every night took the horses from her carriage and dragged it through the streets, while those running alongside shouted "Hurrah for America!" and "God bless our Mary!" It was in Dublin, too, that the ingenious "gallery gods" sent baskets of flowers down to the stage over a rope.

*Romeo and Juliet* was the play determined upon for the next season in London. A trip to Verona in quest of local data and sketches was to occupy the summer. "What!" exclaimed James Russell Lowell when he heard of this, "going into that glorious country for the first time, and in the flush of youth! I am selfish enough to envy you." While visiting in Paris Miss Anderson had a charming interview with Victor Hugo, who proposed a reception in her honor. But she pressed on to Verona, and, like many another before and since, found the old city irresistible.

The Mary Anderson production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lyceum in 1884 was lavish. So much of her time indeed was taken by the details of the preparation of scenery and other accessories that she had scant opportunity for

re-studying her own part. But her excellent memory helped her immensely. Once, after *Ion* had been dropped from her repertoire for three or four years, she rehearsed her entire long part without in the meantime reading it, and with hardly a mistake. The circumstances of the dress rehearsal of this production of *Romeo and Juliet* show how far the stagecraft of the day had departed from the Elizabethan custom. The scenes were so many and so elaborate that though the rehearsal began at seven in the evening, at five in the morning Romeo, Juliet and Friar Laurence were still waiting for the last act to be set. At eight in the evening the public would be there. Discouraged and weary, Miss Anderson could not sleep; when she came to the theatre to face the "first nighters," she was tired in mind and body and unfit for her work. The strain of that performance was nerve-racking. Yet the audience was unaware that Juliet had all she could do to get through her lines, and the cumbersome scenery was set with amazing rapidity. The play was over at half after eleven, a great success; yet to the actress herself her work that night was more painfully unsatisfactory than any other she ever did. But she was hard to please where her own impersonations were concerned. In her fourteen years before the public, she was satisfied with her acting only once as Bianca, once as *Ion*, never as Perdita and only once as Hermione. *Romeo and Juliet* ran, however, for a hundred



nights. Mary Anderson became so imbued with the sufferings of Juliet that she continually spoke of them in her sleep. It is typical of her that, profoundly dissatisfied with her impersonation, she constantly restudied and remodeled it until she liked it better. The brother Joe, who used to gaze with Mary on the green curtain of the Louisville Theatre, was the Tybalt of this production.

At this time (1885) it was proposed that Mary Anderson play *As You Like It* in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford, and she gladly accepted. She had never played Rosalind, and she studied the character carefully. The occasion aroused great interest, and the usually placid village was a gay place. The journalists were there from London, people came from far and near for the play, the stage was decorated with flowers from Shakespeare's own garden. The audience was distinguished and appreciative. The dean of American critics, William Winter, was present, and, in his words, "It was for her [Miss Anderson] that the audience reserved its enthusiasm, and this, when at length she appeared as Rosalind, burst forth in vociferous plaudits and cheers, so that it was long before the familiar voice, so copious, resonant, and tender, rolled out its music upon the eager throng and her action could proceed. Before the night ended she was continually cheered." After a provincial tour ending in Dublin, where her admirers gathered in thousands under her win-

dow and sang *Come Back to Erin*, Miss Anderson in September, 1885, returned to her own country after an absence of two years.

The accounts that preceded her of the remarkable scene that took place in the Lyceum on her last night in London added interest to her re-appearance in America. One who was present that night wrote: "During the evening it was manifest from the fervor of the applause with which she was favored during the performance of *Pygmalion and Galatea* and *Comedy and Tragedy* that the audience was exceptionally sympathetic, but no idea of the scenes which followed the descent of the curtain even entered the wildest dreams of any one present. The audience had been all the evening quivering with emotion. As the curtain fell Miss Anderson was loudly called for, and after the storm of applause which greeted her presence had subsided to some extent, the lady, who was transfigured with the excitement of the moment, said: 'Ladies and gentlemen—the dreaded last night has come—dreaded at least by me. I have to part with you who have been so kind to me. The delight I naturally feel at the prospect of returning to my native country is tempered with a great regret, saddened by the thought that I must leave you. I little imagined when I came before you for the first time, a stranger feeling very helpless, tremblingly wondering what your verdict on my poor efforts would be, how soon I should find friends among you or what pain it would

cost me to say, as I must say to-night, "good-bye" to you. You have been very, very good. I have tried hard to deserve your goodness. Please do not quite forget me. I can never forget you or your goodness to me. I hope I am not saying good-bye to you forever. I want to come back to you. [Tumultuous applause and cries of 'Do! Do!' 'Why leave at all?'] Dare I hope you will be a little glad to see me. [Loud cries 'We will!' 'Yes!' etc.] I shall be very glad to see you. [Immense cheers.] Until I do, good-bye. I thank you again and again.' At the conclusion of the speech the cheering and applause continued without interruption until Miss Anderson—down whose cheeks tears were pouring—had again come eight times before the curtain. The audience, which by this time was on its feet in every part of the house, and wildly waving handkerchiefs and hats, seemed struck by one thought, and the first strain of *Auld Lang Syne* seemed to burst simultaneously from stalls and gallery. People who had never met before seized and wrung each other's hands. Ladies wept and flourished their handkerchiefs hysterically. It is impossible to describe the scene. When I tell you that it lasted for fully half an hour, you will get an idea of what the Englishman, whom you Yankees call phlegmatic, can do in the way of enthusiasm when you touch his heart. It was an ovation which might have affected a monarch."

The American tour that followed, in the sea-

son of 1885-6, took Miss Anderson and her company (the custom by now was that of the traveling organization) not only to New York, Boston, and the other cities in the East and South, but to the Pacific coast. New York did not take to *As You Like It*, but *Romeo and Juliet* was a brilliant success. A public reception in Sacramento proved the affection for Mary Anderson of the city of her birth, but, strange to say, in the single night she played there, the people of Sacramento provided her with only a meagre audience. In San Francisco the warmth of her reception was very different from the crushing disappointment she experienced there a dozen years before.

Now came an entire year of rest. Offers to play in Spain, Germany, France and Australia were refused. The glamour of stage life was a thing of the past with Mary Anderson. By no means blind to the artistic possibilities of the drama, and with still a high faith in its moral function, a stage life for herself was becoming more and more repugnant. She felt the need of calm, of normal life away from the glare of the footlights. The winter of 1886-7 she spent in Paris, in general study and particularly with her French and music. It is characteristic of her that with a chance for recreation and social life, and with all her triumphs behind her, she still sought to mend an education she knew to be faulty.

The Lyceum in London was engaged for the



following year (1887-8). After casting about for some time for a suitable new play,<sup>9</sup> she again fell back on Shakespeare and decided to give *The Winter's Tale*, "doubling" Perdita and Hermione—that is, playing both parts. It was not an easy task. To Tennyson she mentioned her fear that the critics would not receive the venture well. His reply was: "Thank God the time is past for the *Quarterly* or the *Times* to make or mar a poem, play or artist! Few original things are well received at first. People must grow accustomed to what is out of the common before adopting it. Your idea, if carried out as you feel it, will be well received generally—and before long."

*The Winter's Tale* was not enthusiastically received on its first night. But if it was not at once a critical success, it was a popular one, for it ran a hundred and sixty-four nights and could have continued longer. This was the only time that Mary Anderson acted the same play throughout a season. It is worth mentioning that the Leontes of this production was J. Forbes-Robertson.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Miss Anderson said that during this search she considered W. S. Gilbert's *Brantingham Hall*, but, as the chief character was not adapted to her, she declined it. Gilbert amusingly asked her if this was because she found anything gross in it. "For," he said, "I hear that you hate gross things so much that you can hardly be induced to take your share of the gross receipts."

<sup>10</sup> On the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth performance of *The Winter's Tale* at the Lyceum, Miss Anderson was presented with a large laurel wreath from which were suspended a number of streamers in blue and gold, and bearing the names—three hundred and ninety-two in number—of all

It was during this London engagement that Miss Anderson saw much of Tennyson. She visited him in his Surrey home, and on the Isle of Wight; she joined him in long walks, rain or shine, in the country; he read and talked to her for hours together at his own fireside. He prepared for her a play *The Foresters*, a version of his pastoral *Robin Hood*, and they visited the New Forest together in search of ideas for scenery; but the play she never produced.

Mary Anderson was to have but one more season, or rather part of a season, before retiring from the stage forever. She has become the classic example of the actor retiring in the midst of a highly successful career. She has herself<sup>11</sup> indicated the chief reason for her choice: "After so much kindness from the public, it seems ungrateful to confess that the *practice* of my art (not the study of it) had grown, as time went on, more and more distasteful to me. To quote Fanny Kemble on the same subject: 'Never' (in my case for the

the members of the company and staff of the theatre, even to the call boy. In the center of the wreath, and supported by chains, was a brass tablet with the inscriptions: "*En Souvenir* of the One-hundred and Fiftieth performance of *The Winter's Tale*, presented to Miss Mary Anderson by the members and employees, Lyceum Theatre, London, March 2, 1888," and on the other side:

"The hostess of the meeting, pray you, bid the unknown friends to us welcome. . . .

Come, quench your blushes, and present yourself that which you are, mistress o' the feast.' . . ."

*The Winter's Tale*, Act IV, Scene 4.

<sup>11</sup> *A Few Memories*—1896.

last three years of my public life) 'have I presented myself before an audience without a feeling of reluctance, or withdrawn from their presence without thinking the excitement I had undergone unwholesome, and the personal exhibition odious.' To be conscious that one's person was a target for any one who paid to make it one; to live for months at a time in one groove, with uncongenial surroundings, and in an atmosphere seldom penetrated by the sun and air; and to be continually repeating the same passions and thoughts in the same words—that was the most part of my daily life, and became so like slavery to me that I resolved after one more season's work to cut myself free from the stage fetters forever."

There is much in this passage to give pause to the girl who longs for a stage career, for the youthfully ambitious seldom see such a career in its true perspective. Mary Anderson, one in ten thousand in her equipment as an actress, one in a million in the triumphs she won, yet was eager to give it all up. On the audience's side of the footlights the stage is (and rightfully so) a place of beauty, of inspiration, of revelation of the truth. To the actor or actress it is more often than not a place of stern toil, of uncertainty, of disappointment and disillusionment.

The provincial tour following the London engagement ended at Dublin, where the public was as wildly enthusiastic as before. Some of the last night audience even went so far as to

follow in the same train to Queenstown, awakening her at each stop with cheers and greetings.

There followed the final tour in the United States. At Louisville she visited the scenes of her youth and received the congratulatory resolutions of the state senate. She had begun the season with as much zest as she could command, but the strain was beginning to tell on her health. At Cincinnati she acted with difficulty, but completed the engagement. At Washington, in the middle of inauguration week, in 1889, the crisis was reached. "The first scenes of *The Winter's Tale* went very smoothly. The theatre was crowded. Perdita danced apparently as gayly as ever, but after the exertion fell fainting from exhaustion and was carried off the stage. I was taken into the dressing-room, which in a few moments was filled with people from the boxes. Recovering consciousness quickly, I begged them to clear the room. Realizing then that I would probably not be able to act any more that season, though there were many weeks yet unfinished, I resolved at any cost to complete that night's work. Hurriedly putting on some color, I passed the groups of people discussing the incident, and before the doctor or my brother were aware of my purpose, ordered the curtain to be rung up and walked quickly upon the stage. As I did so I heard a loud hum, which I was afterwards told was a great burst of applause from the audience. The pastoral scene came



to an end. There was only one more act to go through. Donning the statue-like draperies of Hermione, I mounted the pedestal. My physician, formerly an officer in the army, said that he had never, even in the midst of a battle, felt so nervous as when he saw the figure of Hermione swaying on her pedestal up that long flight of stairs. Every moment there was an hour of torture to me, for I felt myself growing fainter and fainter. All my remaining strength was put into that last effort. I descended from the pedestal, and was able to speak all but the final line. This remained unuttered, and the curtain rang down on my last appearance on the stage.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> It would be an impertinence to doubt the good faith of Mary Anderson's own statement as to the immediate cause of her retirement in March, 1889. It is nevertheless interesting to observe that at the time, and later, the newspapers freely discussed circumstances which do not enter into her account. One theory was that adverse critical comment, which was found in many reviews of her acting, disturbed her seriously, and preyed more and more upon her mind until she lost faith in her own power, and underwent in consequence a somewhat severe nervous prostration. There was even a wide-spread report that she became mildly insane,—which was promptly discredited and which was of course merely a piece of sensationalism. Particular mention is made of one Louisville critic who, during Miss Anderson's early years was one of her friends and advisers, but who, when she returned at the height of her career, sincerely believed her spoiled and a much less fine actress than she had given promise of becoming. He therefore wrote a frank and fearless analysis of her acting, in which he found much to dispraise. It is impossible to tell with accuracy how much truth there is in this story. Miss Anderson herself says that it was never her habit to read newspaper criticisms of her work, except that someone kept for her those that might prove helpful and that these were used as possible hints when she began work another season.

A little over a year after this unexpected close to her brilliant public career Mary Anderson became Mrs. Antonio F. de Navarro. Her husband was a native of New York, of Spanish extraction, and like herself, of Catholic faith. They were married on June 17, 1890, at the Catholic church at Hampstead, London. During the last half dozen years of her stage career Mary Anderson had become almost an English-woman by adoption. Her new home was made in the little village of Broadway, Worcestershire, and there she has always since lived, enjoying the peaceful life and the domestic happiness for which she longed and which she so richly deserved. She has two children, a son and a daughter. There have not been lacking attempts to tempt her again behind the foot-lights. Enormous sums have been offered without the least effect. For charity she has read or sung once or twice in modest programs, but that is all. The people of Broadway fairly worship her for the gracious and kindly lady she is. Since her marriage she has made a few visits to America, and the American public of the theatre was recently reminded of the former light of its stage when she assisted Robert Hichens in the dramatization of *The Garden of Allah*. But Mary Anderson, though she is now well under sixty, for a quarter of a century has been to most of us only an illustrious name of the past, and to our elders a tenderly treasured memory.

The estimate of Mary Anderson with which

she has usually been dismissed by the casually critical is that she was not a great actress, but an unusually handsome, charming and talented woman who is memorable chiefly as a demonstration that the stage can be the working place of a wholesome, womanly woman.

As to whether she was a great actress there was and is a wide difference of opinion. To her more partial admirers she was the "authentic queen of the American stage," who in each of her parts "gave an individual and potential impersonation."<sup>13</sup> "Such moments in her acting," wrote William Winter, who has always been her friend and admirer, "as that of Galatea's mute supplication at the last of earthly life, that of Juliet's desolation after the final midnight parting with the last human creature whom she may ever behold, and that of Hermione's despair when she covers her face and falls as if stricken dead, are the eloquent, the absolute, the final denotements of genius."

A great deal of contemporary criticism was decidedly less enthusiastic than this. While thoroughly believing in Miss Anderson's devotion to her profession and her conviction of its dignity, many good judges saw in her a woman of talent only, not a genius. The art of the theatre was to her a matter of the highest ideals, deserving the service of the best and noblest in the natures of its followers. Yet as an actress practicing this art she seemed to many incapable of placing her work on any but

<sup>13</sup> William Winter.

a personal basis. Insight into character, it was said, was impossible to her—her Galatea, Parthenia, Pauline, Rosalind and the rest were but herself in different guises. A striking instance of her lack of dramatic insight was her inability to adapt herself to W. S. Gilbert's conception of his own *Galatea*. He wished her to suggest the comic or satiric value of some of her speeches, but she was unable to bring about the necessary subordination of her own personality. The heroic and obviously tragic were her forte. A thoroughly good woman herself, she was rigidly confined by the limits of her temperament, as well as by her views of what the stage should show, to the delineation of good women. She was probably quite incapable of expressing a purely animal nature. "Her acting is polished, and in correct taste," said the *Morning Post* of London, "what it wants is freshness, spontaneity, *abandon*. Of the *feu sacré* which irradiated Rachel and gives to Bernhardt splendor ineffable, Miss Anderson has not a spark. She is not inspired. Hers is a pure, bright, steady light; but it lacks any mystic effulgence. She is beautiful, winsome, gifted, and accomplished. To say this is to say much, and it fills to the brim the measure of legitimate praise. She is an eminently good, but not a great artist."

The word "beautiful" is sure to turn up in any criticism of Mary Anderson. Never was the word used with more justification. She was "a classic figure gotten by mistake into an



unclassic epoch." She was of innate dignity, tall and statuesque, "of imperial figure," fair haired, blue-eyed. Her features were finely chiseled and regular and at once suggested the Greek ideal. Her voice, rich, tender, and with wonderfully full bodied and expressive lower tones, was one of her chief charms. Many men today have those tones still echoing in their minds.

But the spell of her beauty was that it seemed more than skin-deep. It was the expression of a noble temperament, the beauty of a woman of high feeling and sensitiveness, and yet of dignity. It was an essential part of her appeal, though this was not an appeal to the eye alone. It was the beauty of the actress, who could be sincerely concerned first of all with the ideals of her art, of the woman who could say: "The highest praise I receive is the knowledge that someone has gone from the audience with an increased light as to the development of character, a higher sense of moral responsibility, a better spiritual condition for having seen the play."

Whether or not this beautiful woman was a great actress, she was "our Mary" to countless thousands, and such a title is not earned by commonplaceness and dignity, however beautiful. About Mary Anderson there hangs somehow a sense of enchantment, of the realization of an ideal of loveliness, joy and purity. And whether or not she was a genius, there is something heroic in the amplitude of her

career. She began as a poor girl, living in an obscure place, without connection with the theatre. By her noble aspirations, her zeal and patience in their pursuit, and her modesty and worth in their fulfillment, she succeeded gloriously.

In the autumn of 1915, in a performance for the benefit of one of the British war-charities, Mary Anderson acted the sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth* and the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*.



MRS. FISKE





## MRS. FISKE

ONE afternoon a decade ago Minnie Mader Fiske journeyed out from Boston to the neighboring university city, went to Sanders Theatre, scene of Harvard's august ceremonies, and there she talked—engrossingly—on her art. The occasion was in a way memorable. In times not remotely past the possibility of an actress lecturing in Sanders would have been doubtful.<sup>1</sup> But in 1905 Harvard was well along in its career as one of the springs of the renaissance which has of late years manifested itself in the English-speaking theatre. If one said "Professor Baker's work was beginning to make itself felt" it would be saying the same thing in a different way. In many respects the occasion was unusual. The audience was interesting: the professors were there to add dignity and academic distinction; the students, of Harvard and Radcliffe, were there in force to represent the newer spirit of inquiry and effort in matters dramatic; the stage was represented in the audience as well as on the platform (and, oddly, Francis Wilson, Edward H. Sothorn and the speaker cover nearly the whole dramatic range). There was an enthusiastic expectancy in the air. One felt that here was the mani-

<sup>1</sup> Duse furnished the only previous instance.

festation of something genuine and strong. The speaker did not disappoint. Poised and confident, eager and enthusiastic, she spoke for more than an hour and one felt at the end that this small woman had signalized a new spirit in the theatre and in the attitude of educated men toward the drama and its exponents.

She had started life as a baby actress and her formal schooling was snatched here and there in the midst of an ever busy career. Most men (and women) can exhaust the resources of academic training with a total result less brilliant, however, than her hour on the stage of Sanders. But it was only one form of a recognition which is freely accorded. It is quite safe to say that since the death of Mansfield she has been the most noteworthy American person of the theatre. She has consistently championed drama of a high order, which is something superior to theatrical art of a high order. So much would be true if she remained the producer only. Mrs. Fiske, the actress, has placed herself among the chosen few. She, as much as any other, brought to bear on the American theatre what it sorely needed, a keen intellect attuned to the new spirit of naturalism. She was born in a lucky day for this purpose, for, as we shall see, she came to maturity at just about the time when the rebirth in the English drama was making itself evident.

The stage always attracts to itself numbers of people who no doubt sincerely fancy themselves drawn thither irresistibly. The thea-

tre's lure is strong, yet most of its followers have entered upon a stage career more or less as a matter of choice. With a small number, however, the life has been inevitable. There has been no choice, no attraction or glamour even. Such is Mrs. Fiske; she is indigenously of the theatre.

Early in the last century an English girl of good family eloped with her music teacher. Here, perhaps, began Minnie Maddern's artistic career, for this girl was her grandmother. After a while this music master brought his family to America, where he conducted concert tours. One daughter, Lizzie Maddern, the mother of Mrs. Fiske, not only was the youthful cornetist of the company, but she arranged the music for the orchestra and, indeed, became a musician of genuine ability, and, later, an acceptable actress. She married Thomas Davey, a pioneer theatrical manager who carried his company up and down through the South and West in the days before personal management gave way to the highly impersonal direction of the Broadway offices. Davey was noted for his invasion of small unheard-of towns, where often the inn dining-room served as a theatre and scenery was of the scantiest. The actor's life has its uncertainties and hardships in any age or country, but in Western America of the middle of the nineteenth century the conditions were often those known by the strolling players of old. As we shall see, Mrs. Fiske long afterward, and for quite dif-

ferent reasons, reverted for a time to the old practice of playing on extemporized stages.

On December 19, 1865, Marie Augusta Davey was born in New Orleans. From the first of her stage career, which began almost immediately, she was known as Minnie Maddern. There is a pretty story of her first, quite informal stage appearance. A careless nurse had left the baby unguarded. She climbed from her bed, donned her clothes and went out in search of the theatre and her mother. "I forgot to cry, I forgot to be frightened, and I saw some fascinating things before a good-natured fellow picked me up, discovered my identity and took me safely to the theatre. I recall distinctly being held by my new friend and identified at the box-office; then being passed over to a boy who took me around to a narrow, dark door and carried me into a lumbery place and put me in a chair where I looked out into what seemed a bright, sunshiny world with queer trees and fairies. Just then I spied my mother. She was dressed like a fairy, and she was just coming out of a water lily—for it was the transformation scene of a spectacle. I slipped right out of that chair, and, before any one saw what I was going to do, I ran right to her and began explaining my nurse's treachery. I am told that I was received with applause, and that my first appearance, even though it was impromptu, was a success."

Previously, she had been "taken on" when the action required the presence of a baby, and



soon afterwards little Minnie appeared between the farce and the tragedy to do her songs and dances. At three came her first premeditated speaking appearance,<sup>2</sup> as the Duke of York in *Richard III*, and from that day to this, excepting brief periods in school<sup>3</sup> and a few years at the time of her marriage to Harrison Grey Fiske, in 1890, she has been continuously and busily engaged in her profession.

Her career divides sharply into two periods. To the first of these, the twenty-five years that carried her to the time of her marriage, she is now disposed to be rather indifferent. When she refers at all to that time, which is not often, she speaks of the "prehistoric days."<sup>4</sup> It was, nevertheless, a period of thorough schooling, arduous, but fruitful of technical excellence,

<sup>2</sup> At Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>3</sup> At different times, and as the exigencies of engagements permitted, in Montreal, New Orleans, Louisville, the Ursuline Convent in St. Louis, a French school in Cincinnati, and other private schools.

<sup>4</sup> "A person less given to reminiscence than Mrs. Fiske I cannot imagine. Upon revisiting in her professional tours the scenes of her childhood days one would naturally expect a great actress to remark, 'Here is where I made my first appearance,' or 'Here I played the Widow Melnotte when I was only twelve'; but I do not recall that I ever heard Mrs. Fiske make the slightest allusion to persons or places, with one or two exceptions. She was appearing at Robinson's Opera House, Cincinnati. As she entered the dressing room on the opening night she glanced about, and then at me, as if to determine whether or not it was safe to intrust me with the information. She then remarked that when a child she was brought into that room to see Mary Anderson in reference to playing some child character in one of Miss Anderson's plays, —*Ingomar*, as she thought."—Griffith, *Mrs. Fiske*.

and bringing early triumphs—a babyhood and girlhood apprenticeship which is today, for various reasons (one of them being laws in some states restricting the appearance of children on the stage) practically inaccessible. To indicate briefly her early experience it is enough to say that before she was sixteen Minnie Maddern had appeared not only with her father's company, but with a dozen or more of the stars of the day, Laura Keane, J. K. Emmet, Lucille Western, John McCullough, Joseph Jefferson, E. L. Davenport, and the rest of that almost forgotten day. She went through the whole range of juvenile parts,<sup>5</sup> soubrettes, harassed young heroines, boys, fairies, the lads of Shakespeare's plays, and so on through the list, playing wherever the need of a clever child actress called her. She wore long dresses on the stage long before she assumed them in her

<sup>5</sup> The parts she played in this childhood period included: Duke of York in *Richard III*; Willie Lee in *Hunted Down*; Prince Arthur in *King John*, and others of Shakespeare's children; Damon's son in *Damon and Pythias*; Little Fritz in *Fritz*; Paul in *The Octoroon*; Franko in *Guy Mannering*; Sybil in *The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*; Mary Morgan in *Ten Nights in a Barroom*; the child in *Across the Continent*; the boy in *Bosom Friends*; Alfred in *Divorce*; Lucy Fairweather in *The Streets of New York*; the gamin and Peachblossom in *Under the Gaslight*; Marjorie in *The Rough Diamond*; the child in *The Little Rebel*; Adrienne in *Monsieur Alphonse*; Georgie in *Frou-Frou*; Heinrich and Minna in *Rip van Winkle*; Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; the child in *The Chicago Fire*; Hilda in *Karl and Hilda*; Ralph Rackstraw in *Pinafore*; Clip in *A Messenger from Jarvis Section*; the sun god in *The Ice Witch*; children and fairies in *Aladdin*, *The White Fawn* and other spectacular pieces; François in *Richelieu*; and Louise in *The Two Orphans*.

own person, and by the time she was sixteen she was conspicuously successful in old woman rôles!<sup>6</sup> At sixteen, too, she became a star in New York, though this venture was ill-advised. She had won a public by her cleverness and her marked personality, but, much to her credit, she was not adapted to the crude and blatantly personal form of entertainment represented by *Fogg's Ferry*, which was one of the "protean shows" of those days. She was to wait, indeed, many years more for the beginning of her identification with really significant drama. During this young womanhood, from sixteen to twenty-odd, she acted in plays which are never resurrected nowadays by even the most indiscriminating stock company, and which are remembered, if at all, by some old theatregoer who likes to recollect how appealingly, in *Caprice*, Minnie Maddern used to sing "In the Gloaming." *The Storm Child*, *In Spite of All*, *The Child Wife*, *The Puritan Maid*, *Lady Jemima*, *Featherbrain*—these are not so much as names nowadays, even to those who know the theatre well. She had gained thorough, indispensable training, but as yet no memorable achievement.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "The extraordinary thing about Mrs. Fiske's early career is that she should have been even *permitted* to play the range of characters that she did. . . . Frequently a young woman who is physically well developed easily passes for a much older person, and the eye is satisfied even if the ear be not, but little Minnie *was* little, and held her audiences then by her genius, as she subsequently has continued to do."—Griffith.

<sup>7</sup> It is of this period that Mildred Aldrich wrote, in her

In 1890 came her marriage and three years of retirement.<sup>8</sup> It is, for many reasons, not

article on Mrs. Fiske in *Famous American Actors of To-day*: "It was twilight on a very cold day when I knocked at her room at Hotel Vendome. A clear voice bade me enter and in a moment I had forgotten my cold drive. It was a voice which I can never forget, and which even as I write of it comes to my ear with a strange delicious insistence. As the door closed behind me there rose from the depths of a large chair, and stood between me and the dim light from the window a slender, childish figure, in a close-fitting, dark gown. The fading light, the dark dress, threw into greater relief the pale face with its small features and deep eyes, above and around which, like a halo, was a wealth of curling red hair. I had been told that she was young; but I was not prepared for any such unique personality as hers, and I still remember the sensation of the surprise she was to me as a most delightful experience. This was not the conventional young actress to whom I have been accustomed; this slight, undeveloped figure, in its straight, girlish gown reaching only to the slender ankles. There was a pretty assumption of dignity; there was a constant cropping out in bearing, in speech, in humor and in gestures of delicious, inimitable, unconcealable youth which was most fetching and which had something so infinitely touching in it.

"I have never encountered a face more variable. At one moment I would think her beautiful. The next instant a quick turn of the head would give me a different view of the face and I would say to myself, 'She is plain'; then she would speak, and that beautiful musical *mezzo*, so uncommon to American ears, and from which a Boston man once emotionally declared 'feeling could be positively wrung, so over-saturated was it,' would touch my heart and all else would be forgotten. Such was Minnie Maddern when I first met her on her eighteenth birthday."

<sup>8</sup> This was not her first marriage. She had been married when she was about sixteen to LeGrand White, a musician and theatrical manager. They were divorced about two years before she married Mr. Fiske.

"For two years before her marriage [to Mr. Fiske] she had been continually worried with the theatre and her rest was a welcome one. She had many interests beside the stage, and loved to get away to a little cottage, at Larchmont, where she



strange that when she again took up her stage career a new era seemed to begin for her. Not only must her own nature, her insight, and her artistic equipment now have combined to qualify her for new and greater efforts; the whole English speaking theatre was gaining a new lease of life. Arthur Wing Pinero, just emerging into his period of sureness of technique and a frank facing of life; Henry Arthur Jones, dropping his earlier melodramatic manner and about to produce *Michael and His Lost Angel*; Oscar Wilde, with his momentary flash of high comedy; George Bernard Shaw, watchful of the experimentation of others and in addition well saturated with Ibsen; above all, the great Norwegian himself, whose influence knew no difference of language;—these men were, in the early nineties, bringing into English drama a vigor and a relation to life such as it had not enjoyed since the closing of the theatres in 1642.

Mrs. Fiske was keenly, if to a certain degree unconsciously, alive to these influences. To one attuned they were the *zeitgeist*. With an eagerness new to the American theatre she was ambitious to attempt the modern drama—a drama honest and frank in its outlook on life, free from conventional restraint in its choice of themes, and taking its tone from the realities in human character. Not always have the

took an active part in all the doings, and where she was a familiar figure driving a little yellow cart madly over the roads, more often bare headed than not, and always with that wonderful red hair flying in the wind.”—Mildred Aldrich.

qualities of the play been a match for the powers of the actress. Yet, looking over the period since 1893,<sup>9</sup> the list is distinctly noteworthy—first of all, Ibsen, who found in Mrs. Fiske a ready champion. *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Pillars of Society*; surely they form a goodly showing. As for other Europeans, we have Sardou furnishing her, in *Divorçons*, an opportunity, brilliantly embraced, for comedy; Dumas fils is represented by *La Femme de Claude*, Sudermann by *Magda*, and Hauptmann by the short play *Hannele*. Two of her greatest successes, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Becky Sharp* were unusually skillful and satisfying experiments in that difficult form, the dramatized novel. *Leah Kleschna* was worth while as an attempt to raise melodrama into the field of social drama; *The New York Idea* is, so far, the best American example of sophisticated, ironic comedy;

<sup>9</sup> The list of productions beginning with Mrs. Fiske's return to the stage in 1893, and not including revivals, is as follows: *A Doll's House*, and *Hester Crewe* (by Mr. Fiske), 1893; *Frou-Frou*, 1894; *The Queen of Liars* (*La Menteuse*) and *A White Pink*, 1895; *A Light from St. Agnes* (by Mrs. Fiske) and *La Femme de Claude*, 1896; *Divorçons* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 1897; *A Bit of Old Chelsea* and *Love Finds a Way* (*The Right to Happiness*) 1898; *Little Italy*, *Magda*, and *Becky Sharp*, 1899; *The Unwelcome Mrs. Hatch* and *Miranda of the Balcony*, 1901; *Mary of Magdala*, 1902; *Hedda Gabler*, 1903; *Leah Kleschna*, 1904; *The Rose*, and *The Eyes of the Heart* (one-act plays by Mrs. Fiske), 1905; *Dolce*, and *The New York Idea*, 1906; *Rosmersholm*, 1907; *Salvation Nell*, 1908; *Hannele*, *The Pillars of Society*, and *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh*, 1910; *The New Marriage*, 1911; *Lady Patricia* and *The High Road*, 1912; *Lady Betty Martingale*, or *The Adventures of a Hussy*, 1914.

and in very recent days Edward Sheldon's plays, *Salvation Nell* and *The High Road*, have been courageous and justified experiments—the most striking examples we have had of the encouragement of the native dramatist of the newer school.

The capacity to key oneself to the inner meaning of a play, to react on the genius of the author with sympathy and insight, sets apart the artist from the crowd of mechanical players. For different actors there are naturally different forms of this power. For Mrs. Fiske, it can be said that her genius displays itself in the naturalism that reveals at once the realities and the beauties of human nature. Let us see how the group of representative plays named above has represented this power.

It can fairly be said that the distinguishing mark of this group of plays has been its close relation to actual human life. This is of course the distinguishing work of the most characteristic and significant of modern English drama as a whole; but there is much more of this sort of drama now than there was eighteen or twenty years ago, and there has been, until very recently, more of this leaven of truth to nature in the British theatre than in the American. Consider for a moment the character of the average play upon which the public in the United States spent during this period (and rightly enough still spends) millions of dollars and hours. To name a few undoubted successes: *When Knightwood was in Flower*, *The Heart of*

*Maryland, Lovers' Lane, The Christian, Way Down East, Secret Service, The Music Master, The Man from Home, Zaza, Charley's Aunt, The Prisoner of Zenda, Sherlock Holmes, The Chorus Lady, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, The Woman, Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford.* Without denying the necessity of the theatre of mere amusement, of light sentiment, of melodrama, one feels grateful for an ambition that has sought and found something deeper.

To examine Mrs. Fiske's plays more in detail will indicate both the temper of the modern realistic school and the quality of her interpretations.

As for Ibsen, there has been warm dispute as to the validity and helpfulness of his message. Many go to the extreme of saying that he should never be performed at all. With this question we are now concerned only so far as to determine his attitude toward life and the drama for there is no question as to his strength in determining the tone and technique of latter-day dramatists. As Mrs. Fiske herself has said, "the most interesting, the most valuable plays written by others are almost without exception pieces which display the influence of the Norseman's work. It would be an impertinence to say that Sudermann, Fulda, Pinnero, d'Annunzio and the Spanish playwright Echegaray do not write interesting plays. They do, but after all their works are merely those of devoted disciples—not those of the master." To follow her in her Ibsen creed



(and she has the best critical thought with her) is to believe him responsible for our search of truth in the theatre, for the truth to nature that has brought a toning down of violent action and heightened the desire, as Maeterlinck says, "to penetrate deeper and deeper into human consciousness and place moral problems upon a high pedestal. Bloodshed has grown less frequent, passions less turbulent; heroism has become less unbending, courage less material and less ferocious." Ibsen appeals to the actor's imagination, to all he has of brain and soul. In these plays also the sensitive, discerning auditor finds, not the sordid pessimism with which Ibsen has been so often charged, but a burning zeal for rockbottom truth and sincerity and, in some cases, the exaltation of tragedy. It is to be admitted that in his reaction against the drama of futile romanticism, the "story book play" of no character or consequence, Ibsen drew what were, in contrast, grim pictures.

By her unmistakable vocation for the realistic drama, her intellectual acumen, her power and habit of thinking out her parts, both in their larger significance and in their revealing details, Mrs. Fiske was obviously fitted for Ibsen. The restlessness of his women, their curiosity, their keen concentration, found a response in her temperament as her blonde and nervous person pictured their physical aspect. Histrionic methods moreover adapted themselves to both mood and matter. It is interesting to inquire in a little detail what these meth-

ods were and are, for, with modifications, they characterize all her work.

The keynote of Mrs. Fiske's acting is akin to that of naturalistic drama itself, as the dramatist himself understands it. He must portray humanity as it is, with the selection and stress necessary for effectiveness in the theatre. His heroines must be embodied through similar methods. Such impersonation Mrs. Fiske accomplishes with the utmost economy of gesture, action and voice. There is no staginess, none of the aggressive grace of the actress playing a part; she is rather the woman living it. There is obvious none of the routine technique which actors frequently learn of each other, or in schools. This is not to say that her style is not an outgrowth of an earlier technique of a period when no doubt she was sufficiently "stagey" and conventional. In the later period she has refined, out of this earlier experience and her own insight, a method remarkable for its suggestion, its repression, its freedom from familiar device. To the end of theatric effect and illusion she, like all artists, has well defined, recognizable means—some, like her wide-ranged, emotion-charged voice, natural gifts; others more or less deliberate. How deliberate, it would be hard to say, so closely knit in good acting are calculation and instinctive action. Her power of imparting the details of impersonation is notable. Gesture, walk, pose, facial play, intonation, pause, all are worked out with precision and yet with

a reticent naturalness that makes strongly for effectiveness. Particularly convincing is her power of pregnant silence. In Hedda Gabler, "Mrs. Fiske's power of ominously significant silence, of play of feature that reveals the working brain behind, rises very high in the final scene with Brack. He knows her share in Lovborg's ruin; he can bring his knowledge into play in the sordid theatre of the police court. The price of silence is the submission that Hedda, with all her curiosity and zest for evil, is too coldly cowardly to pay. All her tragedy has curdled mean. Her only refuge is the meaner and cowardly escape of suicide. She does not speak, yet one sees the idea germinate, mount and possess her, until it flowers into reckless action." <sup>10</sup>

In the first act of *Salvation Nell* "Mrs. Fiske, as the scrub woman in the barroom, sat holding her drunken lover's head in her lap for fully ten minutes without a word, almost without a motion. Gradually one could watch nothing else; one became absorbed in the silent pathos of that dumb, sitting figure. Miss Mary Garden, herself a distinguished actress, said of this, 'Ah, to be able to do nothing like that.' In *Pillars of Society*, while the Consul was making his confession to the mob, again Mrs. Fiske, as Lona, sat quiet, one of the crowd; but gradually, as she saw the man she loved throwing off his yoke of hypocrisy, the light of a great joy radiated from her face, ending in a

<sup>10</sup> H. T. Parker in the *Boston Transcript*.

stified cry, half-sob, half-laugh of triumph, of indescribable poignancy. To one beholder, at least, it brought the rush of tears, and made the emotional as well as the intellectual drift of the play completely clear, completely fused and compelling. Is not this acting of a very high order, this so intense living in the whole life of the drama that her quietest moment is charged with tingling significance? Is this not true 'impersonation,' indeed?"<sup>11</sup>

Akin to this power of eloquent silence is Mrs. Fiske's use of "felicitous pause." In the middle of a sentence, sometimes in the middle of a word, will come a momentary halt such as anyone in real life is constantly making. The effect is strikingly realistic; the wonder is that many others have not discovered and profited by its simplicity and naturalness. And then, coupled with her many sided faculty of repression, is a power of sudden, telling, emotional speech. Piercing a mood of charged silence, a sentence spoken in Mrs. Fiske's eloquent voice is often of electrical effect.

By such methods, she made Hedda, "an abnormally evil and soulless woman, steadily plausible, momentarily potent, always conceivably human." In the words of the same critic<sup>12</sup> she gave to Nora, in *A Doll's House* "the very semblance of life. When these traits (disdain of convention, curiosity, self-concentration) become abnormal and pass over into morbid

<sup>11</sup> W. P. Eaton.

<sup>12</sup> H. T. Parker.



chagrin and recklessness, sordid selfishness, vicious vindictiveness, hard soullessness and mean cowardice, Mrs. Fiske's intellect and her temperament follow them."

Mrs. Fiske's Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm* excited differences of opinion. To some any Ibsen play is a brilliant study of certain phases of life, to others only a depressing study in degeneracy. It is natural that the actress' work should make varied impressions. In the moments of intense passion she rose superbly to the occasion; her Rebecca had intellectual poise; she suggested beautifully Rebecca's renouncing love. It was, as far as it went, a portrait equal to any of her others, but in a degree she failed to suggest plausibly the fascinating half-intellectual and half-emotional force that gave Rebecca her influence in Rosmer's house. She was a shade too detached, a little lacking in the warmth that must have belonged to Rebecca's ideals and to her love for Rosmer.

One may frankly admit, indeed, that Mrs. Fiske's acting does not please all tastes. What some find to be her repressive force is in the eyes of others "stilted awkwardness." The qualities which to most are her most salient characteristics are to some her "intolerable mannerisms." One comment on her Hedda was that there was "not a large or spontaneous moment in it," that it was "an adroitly articulated mosaic, an assemblage of details, all

precise exposition, rather than a jointless and living whole." Her personality has been described as "cerebral" and "brittle," and her art as "too predominantly intellectual." Attention has been called to her "maddening rising inflection," and, with wearisome reiteration, to what has been called her "unfortunate mannerism of running all the words of a sentence into one another." In this last criticism there is a measure of justice, for at times her speech has been disconcertingly rapid. There has been improvement in this respect of late years, however, and to those playgoers themselves temperamentally adapted to enjoy her work, her enunciation has been seldom indistinct, her so-called awkwardness and mannerisms full of significance, and her "cerebral" acting and personality the means of true impersonation.

*The Pillars of Society*, since it is a social satire rather than an outright tragedy, afforded Mrs. Fiske as Lona Hessel an opportunity for brilliant comedy. It was a small part, too small indeed to have bestowed on it her powers. But she has never chosen plays for their "star parts." She made Lona a delightfully humorous, honest-hearted woman, a masterpiece, within its limits, of satiric comedy. Especially fine was her acting during Bernick's confession to the mob. We have already seen how she sat in one of her motionless silences, listening, in her face the joy of victory—a joy that finally expressed itself in "a little smothered sob of triumphant love which no other American ac-

tress could have invented, or could have executed."

Mrs. Fiske's skillful acting of the lighter passages in *The Pillars of Society* gives point to a contention of many of her admirers—that she should oftener be seen in comedy. In the two conspicuous instances of her ventures into comedy—*Divorçons* and *The New York Idea*, she has been strikingly successful. In Sardou's play she acted with "a refined abandon that was positively captivating, making Cyprienne deliciously capricious and delightfully feminine." *The New York Idea* William Archer found to be "a social satire so largely conceived and so vigorously executed that it might take an honorable place in any dramatic literature." It is an example of high comedy, the comedy "that smiles as it chastises." The title is explained in one of the lines: "Marry for whim and leave the rest to the divorce court—that's the New York idea of marriage." In its lightness of mood and speech the play is a comedy, yet in the author's mind the underlying interest is serious, his purpose being not to make fun of or satirize true love, but to make fun of and call attention to the frivolous, inconsequential attitude toward marriage and divorce. American playwrights have seldom attempted the satirical high comedy of manners. *The New York Idea*, with its spirited, delicately pungent wit, is by all odds the best example so far. Mrs. Fiske brought to bear on her part, that of a wife whose love for her husband per-

sisted after divorce, a lightness and sureness of touch that were a match for the play's best qualities. Her resources of changeful mood happily expressed Cynthia Karslake's high bred reticence of sentiment and rather sophisticated gayety.<sup>13</sup>

*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was written by Lorimer Stoddard within one week, but the result was, in the opinion of William Dean Howells, one of the great modern tragedies, worthy to be ranked with Ibsen's *Ghosts*. At least Mr. Stoddard wrote a strong, truthful play, in the main faithful to the novel by Thomas Hardy that was its original. It was felt at the time that the American stage had risen for once to unaccustomed literary and dramatic heights. The play was produced in 1897. It was as *Tess* that Mrs. Fiske fully "arrived." Of her most notable characters only Nora in *A Doll's House* had preceded. Her abilities had been generally recognized but until now play and part had never so fortu-

<sup>13</sup> In 1907 Mrs. Fiske took *The New York Idea* on an unprecedented tour throughout the West. She played not only as far South as the Mexican border, and along the Pacific coast, but even went into the Canadian Northwest as far as Edmonton, appearing in many towns that had never before seen a theatrical company of the highest grade. And *The New York Idea*, a sophisticated comedy addressed to Eastern audiences, was successful everywhere. At Globe, Arizona, the audience contained hundreds who had come from long distances by train, stage or horse-back. Calgary demanded a return engagement. At Edmonton the play was given in a rink on an improvised stage, and lasted from eleven o'clock—the time of the arrival of the belated train—till two of the early northern dawn.



nately aided her. She was not Thomas Hardy's Tess. It was futile to expect that she would be, for the Tess of the book was simple, primitive, impulsive, whereas Mrs. Fiske's art was always better adapted to reflection and complexity. Such qualities she gave her Tess. And naturally her smallness and blondness do not at once suggest Hardy's heroine. Yet her work was enthusiastically praised. In spite of her disadvantages, in this part, of person and method, the keenness of her perception of *her* Tess and the nervous force with which she imparted that perception to the audience made a deep impression. In moments like that in which she discovers her husband to be ignorant of her past life, or that of the return of the supposed dead Angel Clare, her power of repressed emotion was most effective. While actually doing almost nothing, her horror and amazement were strongly felt across the footlights. The few sentences to her husband that recall the years of waiting and disillusion, were simply spoken but with the agony of Tess's pitiful tragedy. The play was at once successful, and the admirers of Mrs. Fiske, who had waited long for a suitable opportunity for her, felt at last satisfied.

It is as Becky Sharp, in a play based on Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, that Mrs. Fiske is by many most gratefully remembered. The author was Langdon Mitchell, who several years later was to write for her *The New York Idea*. *Vanity Fair* is of course an immensely

complicated study of all kinds of characters in all sorts of relations. At first blush it does not seem promising theatrical material. Mr. Mitchell wisely did not attempt to produce a "dramatization," but selected the most dramatic incidents of the book, took the bare plot thence and wove about it, largely in his own dialogue, a well-constructed play. The climax is the scene of Lord Steyne's visit to Rebecca, with the unexpected arrival home of Rawdon Crawley. This scene, played with consummate skill by Maurice Barrymore as Rawdon, Tyrone Power (and later George Arliss) as Steyne, and Mrs. Fiske as Becky, was admittedly one of the high water marks in the history of American acting. The scene of the Duchess of Richmond's ball on the eve of Waterloo, with the stage full of people at first gay and thoughtless, and then in succession attentive, doubtful, certain of danger, terror-struck, was a masterpiece of complex and thrilling illusion. Mrs. Fiske's Becky is thought by many her finest portrait. Here was an opportunity for subtlety, for piquancy, for brilliancy, for varying moods, for humor. If the Steyne incident was the big moment of the play there were a number of lesser ones. In the half-comic, half-tragic scene in which Becky wheedles out of Steyne money to pay Rawdon's debts, Mrs. Fiske was superb. In its uniformly effective acting, its literary interest, its legitimately spectacular appeal, and its success as an experiment with the native dramatist,

Becky Sharp stands strongly forth in any review of Mrs. Fiske's career.

In *Mary of Magdala* Mrs. Fiske ventured, none too wisely, into the field of poetic Biblical tragedy. Christ and his teachings, and the greatest tragedy of all, form the substance of the play. The stage management was imposing, the production sumptuous and accurate. Tyrone Power as Judas was a genuinely tragic figure and in the strongest scene—that of the temptation by the Roman who was seeking to have Mary buy the safety of Jesus—Mrs. Fiske showed great power. Yet the play was superficial and often clumsy, the treatment of its lofty theme incongruous, and Mrs. Fiske's acting in a measure disappointing. She lacks the sensuous in her temperament and method, and on the whole she lacked in this part sustained power. She was hardly the Magdalene of the Orient.

More surely within the sphere designated by her large but specialized talents was *Leah Kleschna*, a strong drama of the redemption of a thief's daughter by the influence of a man whose house she attempted to rob. The narrative is continuously and plausibly interesting, the incidents of great dramatic effectiveness. The play was "modulated melodrama"—an effort to lift a story of striking incident and broadly drawn emotions into the realm of reality. In the light it throws on the nature of the thief, its making and its possible breaking, the play had its social bearing. The immediate popu-

larity of *Leah Kleschna* was a hopeful sign to those interested in the growth of a worthy native drama. With some point it was asked why the author had not placed the scene of his play in America instead of Paris. Mr. McLellan has not, perhaps, borne out the promise of this one play, but it is interesting to note how many of Mrs. Fiske's later plays have been of native writing. To be sure success has not always been the result. With moderately gratifying results she has played three one-act plays of her own writing,—*The Rose*, *A Light from St. Agnes*, and *The Eyes of the Heart*, all written years before, besides a one-act play, *Dolce*, by John Luther Long. *The New York Idea* and *Salvation Nell* are both, of course, absolutely American. After *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh* and *The New Marriage*, both by Americans, came *The High Road* by Edward Sheldon, the young author of *Salvation Nell*. The foreign-made plays, *Rosmersholm*, *Hannele*, *The Pillars of Society* and *Lady Patricia* have varied this programme, but it is plain that Mrs. Fiske in her encouragement of the native dramatist has been courageous and persistent to a point that few of her rival managers have cared to follow.

The most interesting instance is Mr. Sheldon. While he was still a student in Harvard, his *Salvation Nell* was accepted by Mrs. Fiske. Produced in 1908, it made a curious impression. Without the contour or substance of sound, full-bodied drama, and largely depend-



ing for its popular appeal on the faithfulness of the scenes of the New York slums, the play nevertheless showed the young author's gift for situation, and afforded Mrs. Fiske a part well adapted to her gifts. This comment is almost equally true of *The High Road*, of four years later, which Mr. Sheldon does not call a play at all. It is a "pilgrimage" in which Mary Page is taken through nearly forty years of her life, successively as a young New York State country girl, the mistress of a rich young artist, the awakening young idealist rebelling as she matures, as the woman's labor organizer, and as the devoted wife of a distinguished statesman. The play is not a great one, nor even a big one, but it is firmly interesting and the range of effect for Mrs. Fiske is obvious.

Praise for her steadfast desire to search out native-made plays cannot be too strong, and some of these ventures have been among her unqualified successes, but many of her admirers feel that Mrs. Fiske's continued experimentation with the newer school of American dramatists should be modified—if modification is necessary—to obtain the thorough-going effectiveness of play, player and production she has at times attained. Let us have more *Becky Sharps* and *New York Ideas*, even if it must be in revival.

One important factor in Mrs. Fiske's success has been only hinted. The married life of people of the theatre has been a frequent and sometimes justified cause for unpleasant

comment. In the case of Mrs. Fiske much of the success of the better known half of the house has been to a degree due to her husband. It is pleasant to record this fact—not that it is a unique situation (for married stage folk can be normally happy more readily than is thought) but because Mr. Fiske's share in his wife's productions has not been wholly understood. In a recent letter which Mrs. Fiske distributed to the press she gives to her husband a generous share of the credit for the excellence which has always marked the productions of the Manhattan Company. To him is due, she says, the taste and thoroughness of the settings. The play which she was giving at the time and which gave the announcement point, was *The High Road*. The second act is placed in an apartment in upper New York, furnished by an artist of training and knowledge. The scene bears this out in a way that strikes a new note in stage decoration. The tapestries, the reproductions of oil paintings, carved doors and mantelpiece, the furniture, are accurate to the last detail.

Mr. Fiske leased and managed the Manhattan Theatre in New York for the few years beginning in 1901. With this theatre as headquarters the Fiskes waged vigorous war for eight years against the so-called theatrical syndicate, a combination of theatre owners and producing managers which had for years been acquiring the leases or ownership of most of the theatres of the country. The Fiskes stead-

fastly held out against the dictates of this syndicate as to their plans for tours, and preferred not to become the property of a monopoly which was operated primarily for its money gains. When their continued resistance was strengthened by other "independents," the trust made it increasingly difficult to find theatres to play in. During her tour in 1904 in *Leah Kleschna* Mrs. Fiske in some cities played in summer gardens, and on improvised stages in halls, much as she used to do in the old days of barnstorming. With the rise of a rival syndicate, a rise made possible partly through Mrs. Fiske's help, the lines have loosened and the Fiskes have no longer any difficulty in "booking" their plays.

The Fiskes' organization has become definitely known as the Manhattan Company, though they no longer control the theatre of that name. "As a producer of plays" Madame Réjane once said, "Mrs. Fiske has no superior in Europe." The uniformity of ability in the actors, the adjustment of the characters which often kept Mrs. Fiske herself in the background, contrary to the usages of "stars," the detailed excellence of the stage "business" (as the ball-room scene in *Becky Sharp*) have always given the productions the interest, the appearance of life itself. It is familiar knowledge among those who have closely watched the American stage that Mrs. Fiske is one of the best stage directors of the time. The careful, extended rehearsal of a play is hard work, but Mrs. Fiske,

with the active nervous temperament that demands hard work, is equal to it. She personally directs the rehearsals of her companies, and when one remembers *Mary of Magdala*, for instance, which demanded a hundred actors and was rehearsed more than six weeks, or when one recollects the practically flawless stage management of any Fiske production, her merit as an imaginative producer becomes apparent. Like her acting, her stage management is quiet, effective, tensely alive.

During the retirement immediately following her marriage, and since, Mrs. Fiske has found time to write a number of plays. *A Light from St. Agnes* is a one-act play of much dramatic power telling a tragic story of low life among the bayous of Louisiana. *The Rose* is another one-act tragedy once played by Rosina Vokes's company. *The Eyes of the Heart* is likewise a short play, having for its principal character an old blind man who, after losing his fortune, is kept in ignorance of his poverty by his family and friends. All three of these pieces were played at various times and with considerable success by Mrs. Fiske and her company. She wrote several other plays, some of them longer, but none well known today. *John Doe* was a dramatization of a sketch by Mr. Fiske; *Grandpapa*, *Not Guilty* and *Common Clay* were all long plays; *Fontenelle*, which she wrote with Mr. Fiske, was played by James O'Neill; *Countess Roudine* was written with the help of Paul Kester and was once in the repertoire of



Modjeska. *The Dream of Matthew Wayne* was also written by Mrs. Fiske.

Mrs. Fiske has said that the life of an actor is intolerably narrowed if he has no interests outside the theatre. Such interests she has. The strongest is her devotion to the welfare of dumb animals. The trapping of fur bearers, the cruel conditions in cattle trains, lack of shelter on the ranges, bull-fights, vivisection, all have had her for an enemy. Individual cases of cruelty are constantly receiving relief at her hands and to various allied causes her money and time has been given generously. She often makes addresses before meetings in the interest of such reforms, and at such times the actress is quite forgotten in the humane woman.<sup>14</sup>

The often discussed limitations of Mrs.

<sup>14</sup> "There never was a case of lame or scurvy dog that fell under Mrs. Fiske's notice that did not get instant relief. A mangy and ownerless mongrel cur on the street never failed to find a friend in her. If she were in a carriage, no conveyance was too good for Towser or Tige. Towser or Tige might never have had a bath during all of his unhappy dog days, but into the carriage went the friend of man, and the coachman was directed to steer for the nearest veterinarian, who was forthwith subsidized to make a good dog out of a very much frazzled one, and send the bill to Mrs. Fiske. All over this glorious country dogs were being repaired, boarded, and rebuilt as good as new, when masters were adopted for them, and 'the dog that Mrs. Fiske saved' lived his allotted span and expired loved, honored, and respected. With horses, too, it was just the same. I believe if she were on the way to a *matinée* with the house all sold out, and an abused or otherwise pitiful case of horse attracted her attention,—and it *would*—she would sacrifice that *matinée* before she would the horse."—Griffith.

Fiske have always been said to include her physical equipment. She is no Bernhardt or Terry in stature. During most of her career she has been slender, and there are dozens of women on the stage who will never attain a hundredth part of her compelling personal power, who are nevertheless her superiors in superficial beauty. The truth seems to be that in her has been demonstrated again that when the essentials of acting of a high order are present, actual beauty is a comparatively negligible factor. Nor can beauty, to a degree, be denied her. Her face is, one might say, of the Scandinavian type. Her hair always was and still is, beautiful,—a reddish golden—radiantly golden when dressed to advantage and seen in the glow of the footlights. Her eyes are, at a guess, gray (though even her intimate friends disagree as to their precise color); they are large and, as no one who has watched their part in an impersonation need be told, expressive. Some have complained that her carriage is not graceful; but it has something more and better than grace, for it has significance, fittingness in every walk across the stage, every pose. With more justice has comment been made upon her enunciation, which at times has been undeniably too rapid. As for the voice itself, it is among her chief means to her effects—wide-ranged and sensitive to the mood. It is at one moment charged with emotion, quivering or repressed, at another hard as steel, and again simply matter of fact.

The contrasts are of great, and probably nicely calculated, effect.

The high-minded judgment which has enabled Mrs. Fiske to select plays which never have a false appeal, her freedom from that self-importance which distorts the meaning of plays for the sake of giving prominence to the "star," are indications of her qualities as a woman. She has broad sympathies, enthusiasms for affairs outside the theatre, and cherishes no inflated notion as to her importance other than as a woman of the theatre. In her travels, or visiting other theatres, it is her habit to be heavily veiled and altogether lacking in the "theatrical."<sup>15</sup> She is much more nervous when addressing, *in sua persona*, a small meeting in the interests of some humane movement than when facing a theatre full of people. On the other hand she has an unusually keen sense of humor, and some of her best bits of acting are said to be in impromptu efforts called forth by some circumstance arising

<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Fiske at one time was fond of visiting the motion-picture theatres, heavily veiled and sitting in the back of the house. The better grade of foreign films interested her. And she has recently shown more broad-mindedness toward a growing art than some actresses much lower than she in the artistic scale; for she has herself recently acted *Tess* and *Becky Sharp* for the motion-picture camera.

"When attending another theatre, as she sometimes does on a Wednesday afternoon, she would like, if she could, to occupy an obscure balcony seat, or at the back downstairs; but if that is not feasible, and a box must be taken, she generally ensconces herself behind the drapery, in as inconspicuous a place as possible. There is absolutely nothing of the spectacular or 'theatrical' about Mrs. Fiske."—Griffith.

within the "family" of her company.<sup>16</sup> One of her engaging traits is her complete freedom from the spirit of rivalry and criticism that sometimes characterizes actors. By those close to her she is said never to speak ill of any one. Indeed her acquaintance among other "stars" is limited; while in the world outside the theatre her friends are many and often distinguished. It may not be uninteresting that Mrs. Fiske, unlike many of her profession, likes "playing one-night stands"; that she does not weary of the endless travel of theatrical life;<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "During a rehearsal her poodle entered the theatre and calmly and unconsciously crossed the stage, keeping at a respectful distance from her, however, only condescending to notice her mistress with a side glance. This was so contrary to her customary dashing and bounding approach, that Mrs. Fiske stopped the rehearsal and called to Fifi to come to her. But not Fifi; she merely glanced and continued her dignified and stately promenade across the stage. Persistently and with authority Mrs. Fiske ordered the queenly Fifi to approach. Not for Hecuba—no approach, only a pause. Mohammed must go to the mountain, and Mrs. Fiske did the approaching. Did Fifi grin, or what did the slight gleam of white teeth portend? It was merely the flash of lightning, for the thunder came soon after in a low growl of defiance. Never had such a thing happened before. This impromptu play was good, with Mrs. Fiske at her best, and the audience of actors stood by immensely interested. With tragic emphasis Mrs. Fiske stamped her foot and, pointing in the direction of her dressing room, ordered the black woolly beast to begone and quit her sight, to let the dressing room hide her, and a few things like that, and added something about Fifi's bones being marrowless and her blood cold, and about the absence of speculation in her eyes which she did glare with. Just then Mr. Gilmore remarked: 'That's not Fifi—that's my dog Genie.' Laughter—quick curtain."—Griffith.

<sup>17</sup> "When a series of one-night stands was being played—and she has a perfectly frantic fondness for them—it was our cus-



that she is continually studying to perfect her impersonations or to prepare for future work; and that she has a playful dread of being referred to as "intellectual." That word, as applied to Mrs. Fiske, has become hackneyed.

The warmest admirers of Mrs. Fiske will admit her limitations. They will, indeed, be grateful for them; for her physical and mental equipment, while they withheld from her certain ranges of drama, simply forbade the adoption by her of the tissue of unrealities which constitutes conventional acting. Without either losing for a moment the sense of conditions imposed by the theatre, or gaining her effects by means of commonplaceness set baldly on the stage, she has evolved an extraordinary realism made up of truth to nature combined

tom to charter a Pullman, as she lived in the car instead of in hotels. . . . This she most urgently requested to have placed '*not* at the end of the train.' The rear-end collision had mortal terrors for her. . . . The same nervous fear applied to non-fireproof hotels, in any of which Mrs. Fiske will not go above the second story. . . . Mrs. Fiske appears never to weary of travel, and while she objects to starts ranging from five to ten o'clock A.M., an earlier or later leaving hour does not disturb her; in fact, she says she rarely falls asleep until near morning. We had a prohibition against ringing the berth bells before ten A.M., and also against any kind of alarm clock. . . . Very rarely Mrs. Fiske went to the dining car in the train, her dislike for making herself conspicuous being very marked. This modesty was exemplified in her fondness for veils, as she always wore at least one, and more generally two. . . . Her unceasing employment of time when on tour is in study. It is a never-ending labor, and one that evidently delights her. The preparation for things to come—perhaps a year or more ahead—is always in her mind. . . . During all my time [thirteen years] with Mrs. Fiske she never lost a single night from illness."—Griffith.

with a sense of theatric art so nicely adjusted that even in its most telling moments it is the art that conceals art. It is, in the last analysis, a method that is the visible expression of a rich nature. And by the unalterable fixity of her high aims, the dignity and strength of what she has tried to do, she has earned the gratitude of all those who look forward to an influential, high-minded American stage.

In the spring of 1914 Mrs. Fiske revived *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh*, and in it proved herself at the height of her powers as an adroit *comédienne*. At the beginning of the season of 1914-15 she acted, in several Middle Western cities, in a new play by John Luther Long and Frank Stayton. *Lady Betty Martingale* was an ambitious production that took her into an unfamiliar field, and that promised to rival *Becky Sharp* as a feast of acting and spectacle. It was a "costume comedy," with the London of the eighteenth century as its setting. The play was unfortunately lacking in substance and dramatic interest, and was withdrawn after a brief career.



JULIA MARLOWE





## JULIA MARLOWE

NONE of Julia Marlowe's forebears was identified with the theatre, and she was turned toward the stage almost by accident. When once her fate was determined, her abilities and ambitions were nurtured with the care and privacy given a prize-winning rose, and she was offered then to the public almost full blown. She was none of the wild flowers of the stage—the Ellen Terrys and Minnie Madderns—that grow into a recognized position so gradually that they seem to have been there always. In her sudden leap into public notice Julia Marlowe was something of a parallel to Mary Anderson. Miss Anderson never played anything but “star” parts; nor did Miss Marlowe when once she had called for recognition as a grown-up actress. In her early 'teens, however, years before her début, she had had more than a glimpse of the stage.

Her real name was Sarah Frances Frost. She was born in the little town of Caldbeck, in Cumberlandshire, England, and was brought to America when she was about five. Her family settled in Kansas, but soon removed to Ohio, living first in Portsmouth, and then, when Fanny (as she was then called) was about nine, in Cincinnati. There her father, who ap-

pears to have been some sort of skilled mechanic, died while she was still a child. Her mother was married again to one Hess, the proprietor of a small hotel, frequented by stage people; but this circumstance seems not to have been a determining factor in the young girl's career. Fanny, with her sister Annie, was sent to the public school.<sup>1</sup> One day,<sup>2</sup> when Fanny was thirteen, she came running home to her mother, much excited. She had, she said, a chance "to be an actress and make some money." Colonel Robert E. J. Miles, a successful manager of the early eighties, was organizing one of the numberless juvenile companies that played Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pinafore* throughout the country. "He wanted Fanny," said her mother, "because she was pretty, to play one of the small parts. Well, I did not think much of the stage, and was strongly opposed to having Fanny undertake anything of the kind, but she persisted, and finally so annoyed me that I partially gave my consent. That was the beginning of it."

During the season of 1880-1881, and the two seasons following, the young actress was known as Fanny Brough—her mother's family name. She was promoted from the chorus of *Pinafore* to play Sir Joseph Porter, and she was, besides, Suzanne in *The Chimes of Normandy* and a page in *The Little Duke*. The signifi-

<sup>1</sup> On Ninth Street, between Vine and Race.

<sup>2</sup> According to an interview with Mrs. Hess, printed in 1897 in the Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune*.

cance of this first engagement lies chiefly in the fact that the stage management of the company was in the hands of Ada Dow, a sister-in-law of Colonel Miles. This woman had been a competent though inconspicuous actress, and she was a good stage-director. In one of her charges, moreover—Fanny Brough—she had the discernment to see an actress of exceptional promise. It was to Miss Dow that Fanny Brough, renamed Julia Marlowe, was later to owe her early-won position as an actress of genuine attainments.

Her experience in operetta young Fanny Brough followed by playing six weeks as little Heinrich in one of the several *Rip van Winkle* companies that sprang into being after Joseph Jefferson's success in the play. The Rip in this instance was Robert McWade. Then came Colonel Miles' attempt to make a "star" of Josephine Riley, in the season of 1882-1883. In the company were Miss Dow and Fanny Brough, who now, as Balthazar in *Romeo and Juliet*, had her first Shakespearean part. She also had the formidable duty, for one of her years, of playing Maria in *Twelfth Night*.<sup>3</sup>

During these few years the possibilities for greater things lying in the young actress must have become more and more apparent to Colonel Miles and Miss Dow. Soon after the venture with Miss Riley, Fanny Brough disappeared from the stage and was taken to New

<sup>3</sup> She was also Myrene in *Pygmalion and Galatea* and Stephen in *The Hunchback*.

York by Miss Dow, and there put through a course of training such as few actresses ever undergo.

Off the stage the young aspirant was a rather awkward, self-conscious girl, of a serious turn of mind, imaginative, and like the youthful Mary Anderson, and many another, an enthusiast in her admiration for Shakespeare. Years afterward Julia Marlowe said that she could remember no real childhood. She had gone to no children's parties, and had had no girl friends. "The experiences which come to growing children as part of their girl life came to me only as part of my stage experience. The first long dress I wore was not as a girl, but on the stage as Myrene in *Pygmalion and Galatea*." "At this time," says one account, "she was a saucer-eyed, yellow skinned girl, of a melancholic temperament, high-strung, eager, restless, and unbearable to herself when unoccupied. Her chief joy was to revel in the woes of tragedy queens."

Obviously this was raw material. That the same girl a few years later stepped before the public in the large Eastern cities and, if not at once financially successful, almost at once was recognized as a well-graced, promising actress, says much not only for her native ability, but also for the quality and thoroughness of the training that took place in the interim.

Miss Dow<sup>4</sup> took an apartment on Thirty-

<sup>4</sup>Miss Dow was for many years known as the aunt of Miss Marlowe. There was no actual relationship; but by



sixth Street and a house in Bayonne, New Jersey. In these places—and especially at Bayonne—the girl's studies were prosecuted with the greatest faithfulness for something over three years. There is not the least doubt that Miss Marlowe, during this period of tutelage, worked hard to deserve her later success. Five parts<sup>5</sup> were selected from the "classic" repertoire of the day and were studied assiduously. The pupil learned the cardinal principle of leaving no dramatic effort to chance,—of knowing a part so thoroughly well that it can be rendered with a confidence in all the gestures and tones to be employed. So well indeed was this groundwork laid that it probably had its lasting effect on the actress's art. It has been the commonplace criticism of Miss Marlowe that she lacks the note of spontaneity, that there is evidence of premeditation in all she does.

legal agreement or otherwise Miss Marlowe was an "adopted niece" of the older woman. Miss Dow's interest in her young charge was, naturally, not wholly altruistic. That is, there was a signed agreement by virtue of which Miss Dow was to share heavily in any earnings of Miss Marlowe for a term of years after the début, and was to have a voice in the management of her affairs. After the actress' emergence in 1887 as Julia Marlowe, however, Miss Dow's management continued for only a few years. There was even newspaper talk of Miss Marlowe's having "thrown over" her guide and friend, after she began to meet success. Miss Dow became Mrs. Currier. Her training of Fanny Brough started her on a long career as a dramatic teacher, in which capacity she was active as recently as the autumn of 1915.

<sup>5</sup> Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Julia in *The Hunchback*, Parthenia in *Ingomar*, Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons* and Galatea in *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

"One would not urge," said the *Evening Standard* when she went to London in 1907, "that the outstanding feature of her art is that it is art concealed."

"I never needed the spur," Miss Marlowe has said of her days as Miss Dow's pupil. "The aim of my instructors should have been, perhaps, to keep me from working too hard. Nobody deluded me with the assurance that I was a genius. Indeed the contrary impression was steadfastly enforced, and I secretly decided that I might make myself a genius if I only worked hard enough."

Besides the minute study of particular rôles, her tasks included music, dancing, gymnastic exercises, the history and literature of the drama, and, under the teaching of a singing master, much practice in voice development. The utmost care was taken in matters of carriage and "stage deportment."<sup>6</sup>

Miss Dow's pupil endured the rigors of this training until the spring of 1887. Now, it was thought, the young actress was ready to bid for the public's notice. It was the fixed idea of both the pupil and her teacher that she would appear only as a "star" and only in "classic"

<sup>6</sup> "Whole plays were rehearsed. The instructor served both as audience and prompter. She read all the parts save the heroine's. Scenery and the position of the other players were indicated by tables and chairs. When *Romeo and Juliet* was rehearsed, the back of a venerable haircloth sofa was the balcony rail. With her chin resting upon it and her gaze fixed tenderly upon a worn place in the carpet, she first recited Juliet's impassioned good-night to her lover."

plays. It was but natural that managers were slow to place so much confidence in an untried actress. Months passed, and no manager could be found to take her at her own valuation. What would have been considered by many a good actress attractive offers she repeatedly declined. Finally it was again Colonel Miles who became her patron, as he had been years before. A company was organized, and the erstwhile Fanny Brough, bearing now her new name, made a brief tour (April and May, 1887) in Connecticut, playing Parthenia, Galatea and Pauline. The opening performance was in New London on April 27. She played *Ingomar*, and the next day's local paper said that she was a genius and would "yet wear a crown of diamonds." Pleasing as this praise may have been to Miss Marlowe, the truth is that the brief tour was insignificant, and that not the slightest ripple was caused in the great centers by her début in "the provinces."

The real beginning of Julia Marlowe's career came the following October<sup>7</sup> when, still under Colonel Miles' management, she gave a single matinée performance of *Ingomar* at the Bijou Theatre in New York. "Every one but me,"

<sup>7</sup> On the twentieth. How old was Julia Marlowe on this important day of her life? The date of her birth has been variously given, and authority might be found for any year between 1864 and 1870. As a matter of fact, the Register of Baptisms of the Parish of Caldbeck shows that she was baptized September 23, 1866. Thus she was at least twenty-one at the time of her début, though she was popularly supposed to be about eighteen.

says Miss Dow, "had lost confidence in her. Mr. Miles asked me in trembling tones if I realized what it would mean if she were a failure. Julia had been in such a state of fright for a few days before the performance that she lost her voice temporarily. When the curtain rose on her début she talked so low for a time that no one could hear her. Then I said from the wings, 'Julia, if you don't speak up, I'll come out on the stage to you.' She grew angry at this, and from then on everything went smoothly. At the end of the first act there was a silence for a long enough time for her to get to her dressing room. Then the house burst into a storm of applause and she was called before the curtain again and again."

The town had paid her compliment of curiosity, the critics were more enthusiastic than could have been hoped, and the managers made her various offers, which she consistently refused; all of which constituted a successful début for an actress new to important parts. She was virtually beginning her career at the top, in America's theatrical capital,—a course involving courage and a high-minded disregard of the many short cuts to easily won material rewards.

Julia Marlowe's best publicity agent at this time was Robert G. Ingersoll. The "great agnostic" had been "managed," in his lecture tours, by Colonel Miles' partner, and was prevailed upon to see Miss Marlowe act. However great and good a man he was, Colonel



Ingersoll was not especially skilled as a dramatic critic. Still, such was his influence that his letters of extravagant praise, widely copied in the press, did more than any other one thing to fix her name in the public mind.<sup>8</sup>

In December of 1887 she followed the October matinée by a week at the Star Theatre in New York, playing Juliet and Viola as well as Parthenia, without doing much either to add to or detract from the earliest impression. And then, after this week, came another term of discouraging delay. There came renewed offers of positions in support of other stars, or in plays not to her liking. But she refused them, and said she would play as a star, in the "classics," or not at all. Evidently the Miles contingent about this time lost some of its enthusiasm, for it seems that a six weeks' tour that took her as far as Cincinnati was financed by a new backer, said to be a Sixth Avenue restaurateur named Bristol. Success did not

<sup>8</sup> Besides other things, Colonel Ingersoll said: "To retain the freshness that is her greatest charm she will have to . . . pay no attention to the critics. Her talent needs no guide save that afforded by her experience and her own mentality." One Alfred Ayres, writing to the editor of the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, voiced the protest that was felt in many quarters against Colonel Ingersoll's kindly meant over-enthusiasm: "What nonsense clever men do sometimes talk, when they talk about things they know little or nothing about! . . . There is not a novice in America more in need of guidance than is Miss Julia Marlowe. To let her go her own way would be to let her go to ruin. She is already on the high-road to becoming merely coy, coddling, and goody-goody." Colonel Ingersoll became Miss Marlowe's personal friend. At least one summer she spent with his family.

yet alight on the Marlowe banner, however, and Mr. Bristol lost his five thousand dollars.

Financial success, indeed, was slow in coming to Miss Marlowe, a fact which may seem curious to a public that of late years has been accustomed to seeing the mere words "Julia Marlowe" and later "Sothorn and Marlowe" sufficient to fill any theatre. The restaurant—art supported by oysters!—was followed in his part of "backer" by the New York photographer Falk, who with a supreme faith in his star saw twenty-five thousand dollars slip through his fingers before a change of management and the growing reputation of Miss Marlowe turned the tide.

It was in the fall of 1888 that the American public began generally to be aware of the presence on its stage of a new and beautiful actress. Mr. Fred Stinson was now made Miss Marlowe's manager. He was more adroit than his predecessors, and engaged for her support an excellent company that included Charles Barron, who had been leading man at the Boston Museum, William Owen, an excellent Shakespearean comedian, Robert Taber (who later became Miss Marlowe's husband), and Mary Shaw. A week was spent in Washington, and then another week in Brooklyn. C. M. S. McLellan, writing in the *New York Press* of November 25, 1888, refers to her as "Julia Marlowe, a girl who played a number of parts in Brooklyn last week." "She has a tip-tilted nose," he goes on, "wide, imploring eyes, a

slender shape buoyant with health and youth, a songful voice, and the accidental movements of an innocent. . . . She is now an artiste, in sweet embryo. . . . It is the apparent pliancy of Julia Marlowe, both mental and physical, which makes you admire her now. It also makes you wonder what her fate is to be."

The first genuine triumph of her career came to Miss Marlowe when she reached Boston. Her week at the Hollis Street Theatre in December, 1888, was the first completely reassuring experience of her career, for there, for the first time, did she win the genuinely enthusiastic response of public and critics. In Philadelphia, too, and in Baltimore, and Chicago, she found a cordial welcome. Her ambitions were beginning to be realized, Miss Dow's labors justified, and Mr. Falk's coffers were once more filled.

A correspondent of the Boston *Herald*, writing from Brooklyn in 1888, gives his impressions of the rising "star": "Anything more unlike than this young girl off the stage [he had been 'an audience of one in assisting at her Thanksgiving repast, which was hurriedly swallowed between matinée and evening performances'] and as the character she represents before the footlights I have seldom seen. It is as though she were two distinct individuals, bearing absolutely no relation in manner, face, figure, temperament or intelligence to each other. Away from the footlights, and di-

vested of the rôle she personates, Miss Marlowe is a frank, girlish young woman, almost awkward in her movements, and shy and retiring to excess in manner and speech. There are times when she seems almost plain and again one is surprised into thinking her absolutely beautiful. . . . She is not at all assertive; on the contrary, she impresses one as a person who would never force herself into any prominence. This is Miss Marlowe off the stage.

"On the stage? Well, I had a mental shock when I saw her as Parthenia. It was like a transformation scene, and so complete that I almost failed to recognize the actress as the same shy, unformed girl I had been chatting with. Is she a great actress? Decidedly, no. But I would wager a good deal that the day is not far distant when she will be hailed as such."

Successful as she began now to be in other cities, she did not at once win as much favor in New York. It took her ten years to become as popular in the metropolis as she was in "the provinces." Taking a general view of Miss Marlowe's career it would seem that her conquest of New York coincided fairly accurately with her modification of her early ideals as to playing nothing but the "classic" parts, for, lying between the period of which we have been speaking and the later "Sothorn and Marlowe" campaign with Shakespeare, there were some years (roughly from 1897 to 1904) when



the "classics" were pretty well abandoned.<sup>9</sup>

The first change in the hitherto carefully guarded repertory came in 1894, when she was married to her "leading man," Robert Taber. With a self-subordination rare enough among newly-fledged "stars" she saw herself taking, at times, inferior and sometimes quite unsuited parts in plays produced primarily for the sake of Mr. Taber. The worst instance was *Henry IV*, in which Mr. Taber was an admirable Hotspur and Miss Marlowe a Prince Hal who was hopelessly at variance with the ideal of the part.<sup>10</sup> At this time she was known as "Julia

<sup>9</sup> Beginning with her New York début in 1887, Julia Marlowe's first appearances in her various parts were as follows: Parthenia in *Ingomar*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, 1887; Julia in *The Hunchback*, Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*, 1888; Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Galatea in *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1889; Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1890; Imogen in *Cymbeline*, Charles Hart in *Rogues and Vagabonds*, 1891; Constance in *The Love Chase*, 1893; Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem*, Chatterton in *Chatterton*, Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, 1894; Colombe in *Colombe's Birthday*, Prince Hal in *Henry IV*, Kate Hardecastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*, 1895; Lydia Languish in *The Rivals* (supplementary spring season, with "all-star cast"), Romola in *Romola*, 1896; Mary in *For Bonnie Prince Charlie*, The Countess in *The Countess Valeska*, 1897; Colinette in *Colinette*, Barbara in *Barbara Frietchie*, 1899; Mary Tudor in *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, 1901; Fiametta in *The Queen Fiametta*, Charlotte Oliver in *The Cavalier*, 1902; Lady Barchester in *Fools of Nature*, 1903; Ophelia in *Hamlet*, 1904; Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, 1905; Salome in *John the Baptist*, Jeanne in *Jeanne d'Arc*, Rautendelein in *The Sunken Bell*, 1906; Madonna Gloria in *Gloria*, Yvette in *The Goddess of Reason*, 1908; Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1909; Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, 1910.

<sup>10</sup> For *Henry IV* Mr. and Mrs. Taber had to learn to wear

Marlowe Taber," but the change involved some sacrifice, for, by 1894, the name "Julia Marlowe" had a definite value and the public did not respond enthusiastically to the new order of things. It is a theatrical axiom that the public does not like to see man and wife acting together. One manager<sup>11</sup> brought suit because, having contracted for "Julia Marlowe," he got "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Taber." It has been said that Frederick Stinson, the manager who had labored for years to develop the prestige that attached to Miss Marlowe's name, aged visibly when his work was so rapidly undone.

The artistic coalition that was thought would be the result of the marriage turned out a comparative failure. Unfortunately a personal element that proved anything but helpful entered the situation. Mr. Taber was a skilled actor of a rather hard style—but the printed criticisms of their productions often brought more praise to Mrs. Taber than to him, —naturally enough, as she was the better artist. His resentment at his comparative artistic failure went to such lengths that he quarreled with his wife, and, after three seasons of married joint-stardom they went their separate ways: Taber to London to act with Irving, and his wife, after a meeting in France, and an ineffectual effort on her part to effect a

armor. They used genuine armor, and to accustom themselves to it they wore it for hours each day in their apartments.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Howe, of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia.

reconciliation, to America to resume her career as Julia Marlowe.<sup>12</sup>

A survey of the plays the Tabers gave together from 1894 to 1897 does not show that the public was warranted, from any lack of their adherence to the Marlowe standard of play, in withholding its former allegiance. There was, to be sure, the mistake, *Henry IV*. Mrs. Taber was, moreover, a comparative failure as Mrs. Hardcastle and as Lydia Languish—for her *forte* was not eighteenth century comedy—and *Romola* afforded scarcely any opportunities for her, while Mr. Taber's Tito had a great success. But all of these plays excepting *Henry IV* were really incidental, and at different times during these three years Mr. and Mrs. Taber were playing a number of the old Julia Marlowe successes: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado*, *Ingomar*, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, *The Hunchback*, and *The Lady of Lyons*.

It was not until 1897, when the separation had taken place and Miss Marlowe had placed herself under the management of C. B. Dillingham, associated with Charles Frohman, that her period of artistic eclipse, and of great commercial prosperity, began. At the dictation of her new management, she abandoned almost altogether the heroines of poetic drama, and

<sup>12</sup> She obtained a divorce in January, 1900. Four years later Taber died, of tuberculosis, "at a refuge in the Adirondack Mountains, provided for him,—for he had been rendered practically destitute by illness—through the goodness of his former wife." (Winter.)

began a seven-year term in the service of the dramatized novel and the quickly forgotten modern ephemeral play. *The Countess Valeska*, *Colinette*, *Barbara Frietchie*, *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, and *The Cavalier* make rather a sorry showing when compared with most of the list just given. She was made at last a successful "star" in New York,<sup>13</sup> but, as John Corbin wrote at the close of this period of eclipse, she was "mourned by the 'road' [i. e., the country outside New York] as the living tomb of a youth of abundant promise."

Of these plays of the interregnum it is curiously true that those least entitled to serious consideration as drama, *Barbara Frietchie* and *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, were the most successful in advancing Miss Marlowe to the heights of popularity. *Colinette*—which was adapted from a French play—and *The Countess Valeska*—from the German—were both justified as skillfully written romantic dramas, of much strength and charm, if not of permanent value. *Barbara Frietchie* and *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, however, were highly artificial, thin, pseudo-historical dramas, one dealing with the heroine of Whittier's poem—the play was by the prolific Clyde Fitch—and the other a fictional episode in the life of Mary Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII.

<sup>13</sup> In the season of 1895-96 during the "Mr. and Mrs. Taber" period, they had played with some success at Wallack's, practically her first down-town engagement since the debut in 1887. It was during this engagement that William Dean Howells wrote enthusiastic praise of her Juliet.



Miss Marlowe's sincerest admirers deeply regretted the time and energy she spent, year after year, on these and like plays; but they often asserted that her acting transformed and beautified the material with which she worked. As Colinette, according to Mr. Winter, she "gave a performance of singular flexibility and of exceptionally artistic grace, such as not only pleases while passing but leaves in the memory an ideal of noble and lovable womanhood,"—strong and partial words, but indicative of the glamour Miss Marlowe has thrown over inferior plays. "Her utterance of Barbara's appeal to her father for her wounded lover's life," says Mr. Winter of her acting in Mr. Fitch's play, "was spoken with exquisite beauty, and her expression of the frenzy of grief, on finding him dead, reached as great a height as is possible to spoken pathos."

As for *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, an English critic later said: "There is a certain lilt and go, a touch of nature among the fool's fabric of the melodrama, which set her far above our steady practitioners in the same act of sinking. And, above all, a sense of parody pierced through words and actions, commenting wittily on the nonsense of romance which so many were so willing to take seriously. She was a live thing; defiantly and gayly conscious of every absurdity with which she indulged the babyish tastes of one more public."

All this playing in popular pieces of the day involved a certain amount of additional train-

ing for the work that was to come,—the third and last period of Marlowe's work,—the ten years during which she and Edward Sothorn were "joint stars." She brought to her new work a variously experienced, thoroughly disciplined art.

It sent something like a thrill through that large part of the public interested in the theatre, when it was announced, in the summer of 1904, that Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothorn were to act together in Shakespeare. It was felt that the actress was again coming into her own.<sup>14</sup>

Some of her parts with Mr. Sothorn were but revivifications of heroines of her early career: Juliet, Viola, Beatrice, Rosalind; others she attempted for the first time during one or another of these years from 1904 to 1914: Ophelia, Katherine the Shrew, Lady Macbeth, and, at the inauguration of the ill-fated New Theatre in New York, Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

<sup>14</sup> This memorable alliance first went into effect in Chicago, September 19, 1904, at the Illinois Theatre. It continued for three seasons, after which, during the seasons of 1907-8 and 1908-9, each again headed separate companies. In 1909 they rejoined forces, and continued to act together until the spring of 1914, when Miss Marlowe was taken sick, and Mr. Sothorn continued alone. At this time it was announced that Miss Marlowe had retired from the stage for good. There was subsequently some talk of a farewell tour, but Miss Marlowe's retirement was definitely confirmed in the summer of 1915. As everyone knows, the two stars became man and wife. The marriage occurred in London, in 1911.

The American public, whatever its expectations in 1904, has since come to take a rather complacent view of its privilege in seeing Miss Marlowe and Mr. Sothern act Shakespeare together. They have been financially extremely successful. Several other attempts during this period to popularize Shakespeare in America (and some of them were "produced" and acted in a manner to make them fit rivals) have struggled through brief and only moderately well supported existences; while Sothern and Marlowe have gone on for the best part of ten years, drawing crowded houses. Yet many an old time playgoer, who has followed Julia Marlowe's career since its beginnings, will tell you that nothing she has done since has quite equaled, in the combined appeal of its fresh youth, its varied beauty, and its unforced poetic moods, the acting of the Julia Marlowe of early days.

The summer of 1906 Miss Marlowe spent—as she has many others—in Europe. One of the places she visited was the birthplace of Jeanne d'Arc, for she was contemplating the production of Percy MacKaye's play concerning the Maid. When she returned to America, she and Mr. Sothern dissolved their association with the Frohman side of the theatrical house, and went over to the Shuberts. There followed the production of a group of plays new to her experience, *John the Baptist*, by Sudermann, in which she played Salome, *The Sunken Bell*, by

Hauptmann, a piece retained from Mr. Soth-  
ern's earlier repertoire, and *Jeanne d'Arc*.

It was with the last two plays, and with *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, and *Twelfth Night*, that Miss Marlowe ventured for the first time to appear in London, in the spring of 1907. The success of the Sothorn and Marlowe engagement at the Waldorf Theatre hung at first in the balance, for the first play presented was *The Sunken Bell*, which failed to appeal to London. As for Miss Marlowe as Rautendelein, she was dismissed by Mr. Walkley in *The Times* as showing the grace and elfishness and charm of the character; "but she was not," he continued, "exactly a frisky fairy."

The tide turned with Miss Marlowe's *Viola*, and, somewhat to the surprise of his followers at home, with Mr. Sothorn's *Hamlet*, which was hailed as a distinguished achievement.

One English writer, Arthur Symons, quite lost his head in admiration of the American visitors. "We have not in our whole island," he wrote, "two actors capable of giving so serious, so intelligent, so carefully finished, so vital an interpretation of Shakespeare, or indeed of rendering any form of poetic drama on the stage." Berbohm Tree gave them a supper at His Majesty's; Mr. Asquith was there, a prince or two, and, more to the point, a representative group of England's stage workers. "There is danger," said *The Evening Standard* when she played *Viola*, "of our all becom-



ing Marlowe worshipers if she goes on like this." <sup>15</sup>

Though the London critics appraised Mr. Sothorn's Hamlet higher than American reviewers ever did, and though the newspaper comment on each play was favorable, except on *The Sunken Bell* and *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, the London public did not attend in great numbers.

Still, the English tour may be said to mark the apex of the career of both artists. When they returned home each was for a time again an independent "star." When the ambitiously planned New Theatre, in New York, opened its doors for what was fondly hoped

<sup>15</sup> Mr. Walkley wrote in *The Times* an eloquent tribute to her Viola, which he found "bewitching." "In the purely sensuous element in Shakespeare, in the poet's picture of frankly joyous and full-blooded womanhood, the actress is in her element, mistress of her part, revelling in it and swaying the audience by an irresistible charm. She aims at no startling 'effects'; she seems to be simply herself—herself, that is, glorified by the romance of the part—enjoying the moment for the moment's sake, and so making the moment a sheer enjoyment for the spectator. That is now clearly shown which in her earlier parts could only be divined—that here is a genuine individuality, a temperament of real force and peculiar charm. High-arched brows over wide-open, eloquent eyes; a most expressive mouth, now roguish with mischief, now trembling with passion; a voice with a strange croon in it, with sudden breaks and sobs—these, of course, are purely physical qualifications which an actress might have and yet not greatly move us. But behind these things in Miss Marlowe there is evidently an alert intelligence, a rare sense of humor and a nervous energy which make, with her more external qualities, a combination really fine. She beguiled not only Olivia, but the whole house to admiration. Here, then, is one of Shakespeare's true women."

would be the dawn of a new era in the American theatre, Miss Marlowe and Mr. Sothern were the leading members of a cast assembled to perform *Antony and Cleopatra*. The production pleased neither public nor critics, and it cannot be said that Miss Marlowe will be remembered chiefly for her Cleopatra. Since then "Sothern and Marlowe" have again carried Shakespeare up and down the country.

Why is it that the public, loyal as it has been to them, has taken their untiring campaign in fostering the Shakespeare tradition so much as a matter of course? Perhaps it is because nearly everyone speaking English now takes Shakespeare himself as a matter of course, to be accepted, like starlight and the blessings of a free government, with unenthusiastic complacency, and because Miss Marlowe herself is so utterly Shakespearean. For everything she has done has had a Shakespearean tinge. "She was so infinitely more charming [as Mary Tudor] than the play justified her in being," someone once wrote. "She looked exactly as she would have looked had the play been Shakespeare's."

"Those of us who saw her as the Queen Fiametta remember well how incongruously like Hermione she looked and was. When Miss Marlowe played Colombe in *Colombe's Birthday* she seemed to forget that she was not playing Rosalind. And even in Mr. Esmond's distinctly modern drama, *Fools of Nature*, Miss Marlowe to more than one spectator suggested

the England of Shakespeare's day oftener than the England of to-day."<sup>16</sup> As for Shakespeare's plays themselves: Her Viola, both of the early days and of the later period, was so lovely an embodiment of the poet's ideal that he himself would have been satisfied with it; her Juliet, her Beatrice, her Rosalind, all in more or less degree, were filled with the peculiarly Shakespearean spirit, the radiant sweetness and vitality of his women.

There is abroad among the theatregoers of America a peculiar, almost personal affection for Miss Marlowe, which is not inconsistent with the complacent feeling of which we have spoken. There is about Marlowe none of the overpowering sense of riding the whirlwind that has accompanied Bernhardt in her royal progresses about the planet; she has none of the picturesque ebullience of a Terry, nor even the specialized appeal of Maude Adams. She has been a happy "combination of the poetically ideal and the humanly real" that wins, for a beautiful and skillful actress, a position in the popular heart, even if it does not take her, because of more or less extraneous characteristics, into the front rank of "personages."

Miss Marlowe, in her quoted utterances, has occasionally thrown light on her attitude toward her own work and toward her profession:

"I wish they wouldn't confound me so much with the parts I play and imagine I must be

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth McCracken.

playing my own emotions because I give the part I am playing an air of reality."

"It isn't the rewards that one works for;<sup>17</sup> we work because we have to, because we can't stop. Except for a shallow or vain nature there is nothing in the rewards of this profession commensurate with its pains; but in the very labor of it there's joy, if you're born to know it, that nothing else can approximate for you."

Those who have known Miss Marlowe in her own person say that the simplicity and the good taste observable in her work as an actress find a counterpart in her life off the stage. The home she maintained for years at Highmount in the Catskills was a quiet retreat where she enjoyed the outdoors, her books, and the society of a group of friends, most of whom were not personages known to the theatregoing public. Her liking for books, which is said to be keen, induced her not only to carry about on her travels hundreds of volumes, but at one time to take up seriously the study of the mysteries of bookbinding. One summer she spent in Germany, taking lessons in that craft, and in her library are a number of volumes, illuminated and bound by her own hands. She sings a little, plays the piano well, and has a well-grounded musical knowledge. Unlike many another successful actress—Mary Anderson,

<sup>17</sup> One can doubt the *entire* truth of this statement without denying the larger truths lying in her general statement.



for instance—she retained her early strong love for her profession.

“The rarest quality of Miss Marlowe’s art,” says Elizabeth McCracken, one of Miss Marlowe’s closest friends, with what is probably true insight, “is its lovely youthfulness. Her mirth is utterly young; at its gayest, it is tinged by a certain wistful gravity. Her woe is young, too; at its saddest, no drop of bitterness stains it. Children instinctively accept her as a kindred spirit, someone not so different from themselves as most grown-ups.”

Add to this engaging youthfulness—another name, perhaps, for her sense of poetry—her dark and buoyant beauty, her rich voice that lent its own music to Shakespeare’s, and you have Julia Marlowe, not a genius, certainly, but one of America’s gracious women, who has brought beauty in many forms to the American stage in a period when, but for her, it had been sadly lacking.

## MAUDE ADAMS

**T**O say that she is the most valuable piece of theatrical property in the country is a brutally commercial way to speak of an artist; but that is the familiar and true, if one-sided, estimate of Maude Adams. From a small career, notable in its way, as a child actress, through a girlhood that had its struggles and trials, to an early share of success and then to an amazing degree of affectionate popularity, a popularity far exceeding that of greater artists, has been her record. The mere announcement of her name, without respect to the play she is acting, is enough to fill any theatre in the United States. Her popularity is such that it amounts almost to an unreasoning worship. One can safely say that, among the women, at least, of America there is an unorganized Maude Adams cult. And whatever the lack of proportion between this adulation and the intrinsic artistic worth of her achievements, it cannot be said that Miss Adams' popularity has been unfairly won. She has let her acting—whatever its limitations—and her variously expressed ambitions speak for themselves, without Bernhardtian advertising. The public knows her not at all except



MAUDE ADAMS





as it sees her across the footlights. She is one of the dignified women of the theatre.

Her mother, Annie Adams, an actress well known to the passing generation of playgoers, was descended collaterally from the Presidential Adamses of Massachusetts. James Kiskadden, the father of Maude Adams, "a man of handsome masculinity," at the time of his daughter's birth had come out of the Middle West to practice in Salt Lake City his business of banking.<sup>1</sup> Annie Adams has been better known as the mother of Maude Adams than as an actress in her own right; nevertheless she has had a long career as a capable actress. When Maude was born in Salt Lake City, on November 11, 1872, her mother was a member of the local stock company.

The public had not long to wait for its first glimpse of Maude Adams. When she was nine months old she was taken one night to the theatre where her mother was playing. According to the custom of the day, the evening's entertainment ended with a short farce, this time *The Lost Child*. In this piece a baby is carried on and off the stage several times, to be finally carried in on a platter and set down before its distracted father. The baby used on this occasion was only a month or so old, and, as might have been expected, it began to howl lustily in the midst of its travels about the stage. Just at this moment Mrs. Adams, who was not playing in the second piece, was about to leave the

<sup>1</sup> James Kiskadden died when Maude was ten years old.

theatre, when the stage manager caught sight of little Maude. Miss Adams' début took place instantly, for she was placed on the platter and rushed onto the stage in place of the howling child. As the latter was some eight months the younger, the audience was treated to the unusual spectacle of seeing a child take on twenty pounds in a few minutes.

After a while the family moved to San Francisco. From time to time the little Maude appeared on the stage, although for the most part she lived the life of the ordinary child. Her glimpses of the life of the stage were probably more than enough, however, to "bend the twig." Once her mother was supporting J. K. Emmett in *Fritz in Ireland*. Mr. Emmet had seen Maude and wished to have her play a child's rôle in this piece. Her father at first demurred, as Maude was only five. The child was eager to take the part, however, and was finally allowed to do so.

After another interval of dolls and books, she played, when about six, the child in *A Celebrated Case*. She learned her small part so well that she had ample leisure to memorize most of the rest of the play. One man in the company, it is said, was often in her debt for swift and accurate prompting.

The rest of her childhood was divided between school—the Presbyterian School for Girls in Salt Lake City—and occasional appearances on the stage. Her mother insisted on the schooling, and Maude was bright enough

at her studies. But one cannot wonder that the life of the stage had already enthralled the little girl. At any rate she left her books on occasion, to play such parts as Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Paul in *The Octoroon*, and Oliver Twist.

"Little Maudie Adams" came to be the first choice for children's parts in the best companies playing along the Pacific coast. One who saw much of her in those days, and who took pains to give her much undoubtedly valuable instruction, was David Belasco. "I was the stage manager of the Baldwin<sup>2</sup> then," said Mr. Belasco. "James A. Herne and I were playing there together, and in our plays there was usually a child's part. Annie Adams I had known for some years as one of the best character actresses of the West, but my first remembrance of Maude Adams is of a spindle-legged little girl, unusually thin and tall for her age, with a funny little pigtail and one of the quaintest little faces you ever saw. I don't think even her mother considered Maudie pretty in those days. But even in her babyhood there was a magnetism about the child,—some traces of that wonderfully sweet and charming personality which was to prove such a tremendous advantage to her in the later years. . . . She could act and grasp the meaning of a part long before she was able to read. When we were beginning rehearsals of a new

<sup>2</sup> In San Francisco.

play I would take Maudie on my knee and bit by bit would explain to her the meaning of the part she had to play. I can see her now, with her little spindle legs almost touching the floor, her tiny face, none too clean, perhaps, peering up into mine, and those wise eyes of hers drinking in every word. I soon learned to know that it was no use to confine myself to a description of her own work: until I had told the whole story of the play to Maudie, and treated her almost as seriously as if she were our leading 'star,' she would pay no attention. She was serious-minded in her own childish way even in those days, and once she realized that you were treating her seriously there was nothing that child would not try to do."<sup>3</sup>

One of "Little Maudie's" successes at this time was in *Chums*, which Mr. Belasco had adapted from an old English play *The Mariner's Compass*. Mr. Herne, who played in it at the time, later made and acted in another version, *The Hearts of Oak*. The character Crystal (for whom Mr. Herne undoubtedly named his daughter) occurs in both versions. "From the time Maude Adams created the rôle," says Mr. Belasco, "it became one of the most vital parts of the play. *Chums*, in short, scored an immense success, and 'Little Maudie' for time being was the heroine of the town."

Mrs. Adams had seen to it that Maude received more of the ordinary schooling than

<sup>3</sup> Acton Davies—*Maude Adams*.



sometimes falls to the lot of a child actress. When she was thirteen, however, her schooling was called complete. The girl had had her taste of success and during her term at school had dreamed of returning to the stage. She told her mother: "It's no use my studying any more, mother. . . . I want to go on the stage again, so that I may be with you." But when the attempt was made it proved to be not the easiest thing in the world. As a child actress of less than ten, she had found parts awaiting her. As a young girl in her middle teens, parts were much harder to find. She traveled about with her mother, getting an occasional small part, such as one of the old women in *Harbor Lights*, or the Princess in *Monte Christo*. In the meantime, she studied hard, absorbing her mother's instructions and learning many rôles.

When Miss Adams was just under sixteen she and her mother crossed the country—in the caste of the melodrama, *The Paymaster*,—to try their fortunes in the Middle West and finally in New York. Although it is on record that she won "a great deal of praise for her simplicity and beauty," one can see, in the account of her nightly "plunge into a tank of real water,"<sup>4</sup> a far cry to her later distinction as the interpreter of the subtleties of Barrie.

According to thrice-repeated tales, which her mother has recently taken occasion to deny, it was only after a discouraging period of waiting

<sup>4</sup> Part of the time, at least, Mrs. Adams substituted herself for Maude when the time for this plunge arrived.

and of fruitless visits to managers, that Miss Adams got her first opportunity, when *The Paymaster* had run its course. A more tangible tradition is to the effect that while awaiting something better Miss Adams worked for a while as a ballet girl.<sup>5</sup> According to Mrs. Adams, Maude had not long been in New York when Daniel Frohman offered her a position in the company supporting E. H. Sothern. Virginia Harned took up the cause of the young actress, and introduced her to Mr. Sothern. "I must have been a strangely unattractive and unclassified creature at the time," says Miss Adams, "too young for mature parts and too old for child impersonations. Miss Harned, who had played child parts with me, had succeeded in interesting Mr. Sothern in me and one great day I was invited to dine with them in a public restaurant. I am sure that I disgusted Mr. Sothern with my unconquerable bashfulness and awkwardness. Painfully diffident, I scarcely uttered a word during the whole of that dinner. Nonetheless I was soon afterward engaged to play in the Sothern company."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Yes, I confess it," she has declared, "I was in the ballet for six brief months. There is much to be learned there, and some the ballet's teachings may be advantageously applied to the art of acting. Studied forms of dancing are not, perhaps, an essential part of a player's outfit, but they have a certain related value not to be lightly esteemed."—Perriton Maxwell.

<sup>6</sup> Perriton Maxwell. Her parts in Mr. Sothern's company were: Louisa in *The Highest Bidder*, and Jessie Deane in *Lord Chumley*.

The engagement with Sothern was brief, however, like all that had gone before. Not until she was given the part of Dot Bradbury in Hoyt's farce *A Midnight Bell* (in March 1889) did circumstances combine to give her a good part, a long engagement, and some public notice. Until now she was quite unknown to the public at large. But she played this part through the spring and all during the following season. Discerning playgoers, and a critic here and there, began to speak of her as one of the promising youngsters of the stage, and what was more important, she attracted the attention of Charles Frohman, who in the fall of 1890 was organizing a stock company for the Twenty-third Street Theatre. Mr. Frohman gave Miss Adams a place in this company, and from that day until his death—twenty-four years—she remained under his management.

Her first part with Mr. Frohman was a small one—Evangeline Bender in *All the Comforts of Home*. She gave it some distinction, however, and in her next part, in *Men and Women*, she was watched with interest. That Mr. Frohman's choice of this new actress was unfortunate, was the opinion of many. She was small, thin, pale—quite the opposite of the accepted type of stage beauty; but she acted well enough, apparently, for soon she was playing Nell, the crippled girl in *The Lost Paradise*. The part called for one passage of heightened emotion,—“a fierce little bit of melodrama” that served to attract new notice

to Miss Adams. "In an audience of seasoned first-nighters and blasé fashionables there were moist eyes and a surreptitious blowing of noses when Maude Adams gave rein to that tender pathos which is all her own," says one witness. "This wan, hopeless figure peering wistfully from its shabby raincoat out upon a life she could neither know nor understand was a triumph of natural emotion simulated with superb restraint." Mr. Frohman showed his new company not only to New York, but sent it on long tours throughout the country.

So well did Miss Adams acquit herself in these first two years with Mr. Frohman that in 1892, when John Drew left the company of Augustin Daly after eighteen years' service, and became a "star," he insisted on having her as his leading woman. Mr. Frohman, his new manager, had had in mind someone of more established reputation, of more thoroughly tried gifts. But Mr. Drew had his way, and Miss Adams her first real opportunity. She was surprisingly successful. The play was *The Masked Ball*.<sup>7</sup> Her part was a brilliant, high-comedy rôle, demanding at once spirit and subtlety. It was admitted that she did not look the part, that there was something awkward and boyish about her Suzanne Blondet. Yet her intelligence, her fine voice, her charm, and her sincerity in emotional passages won her much warm praise. It was her difficult task in

<sup>7</sup> Produced at Palmer's Theatre, New York, October 3, 1892. It was a French play, adapted by Clyde Fitch.



one passage of this play to act a woman who is feigning intoxication. To make this tipsy scene anything but disagreeable was a severe test for a comparatively unknown woman, who at best had much to do to win her audience. Win it she did, however, for she was called a dozen times before the curtain. *The Masked Ball* had a successful career of a year and a half, and Maude Adams, at its close, had pretty well established herself. At less than twenty she was a "leading woman," the youngest of the day.

Miss Adams remained as John Drew's principal supporting actress for five seasons—from the fall of 1892 to the spring of 1897.<sup>8</sup>

The success of *The Masked Ball* was not repeated at once, not until four years later, indeed, when *Rosemary* gave both Mr. Drew and Miss Adams excellent opportunities. In the meantime she had had occasional small triumphs, and only one approach to downright failure—in *The Squire of Dames*. In this play she had the part of a flippant, heartless young society woman, and, truth to tell, she didn't do much with it. In the *Bauble Shop*, however, she had had an opportunity for her simplicity and pathos, while in *That Imprudent Young Couple* she rose superior to the play,

<sup>8</sup> Her parts were: Suzanne in *The Masked Ball*, 1892; Miriam in *The Butterflies*, 1894; Jessie Keber in *The Bauble Shop*, 1894; Marion in *That Imprudent Young Couple*, 1895; Dora in *Christopher, Jr.*, 1895; Adeline Dennant in *The Squire of Dames*, 1896; Dorothy Cruikshank in *Rosemary*, August, 1896. On December 9, 1896, she played Mary Verner in *Too Happy by Half*.

and prompted this criticism: "That Miss Adams was able to interest her audience at all last night was due entirely to the charm of her own personality. Her work is still exceptional in its daintiness and its simplicity. . . . She has found the short cut from laughter into tears. It is good to see that the remarkable success that has come to this young actress has not turned her head."

As for *Rosemary*, the last play of the John Drew-Maude Adams period, it is to be said that it is one of the most charming of the many plays of its gifted and long-laboring author, Louis N. Parker. It is a pleasantly old-fashioned, idyllic comedy of the England of Victoria's accession, and seems to have disclosed equally Miss Adams's gifts of comedy and of pathos;—a play well suited to her middle period.

At this time James M. Barrie was in America. He was planning the dramatization of his novel *The Little Minister*. He saw Miss Adams as Dorothy and marked her at once as the woman to play his Lady Babbie. Mr. Frohman already had half-formed plans for promoting her, and the opportunity to play *The Little Minister* came just at the right moment. Mr. Drew was deprived of his popular leading woman, and on September 13, 1897, at the Lafayette Square Opera House in Washington (and two weeks later at the Empire in New York) Maude Adams was launched upon her career as a "star." The success of play and player was immediate and great, for on this occasion began

that combination of dramatist and actress—Barrie and Maude Adams—that has proved so singularly appealing,—not only in this play, but in *Quality Street*, in *Peter Pan*, *What Every Woman Knows*, and in *The Legend of Leonora*.<sup>9</sup>

For three whole seasons Maude Adams played Lady Babbie, the first season in New York and then, until the spring of 1900, up and down the whole country. It earned for her several fortunes. The play is, as Mr. Winter<sup>10</sup> has said, a “neat but inadequate paraphrase” of the novel, and the character of Babbie has not the substance and power of the Babbie of the book. Relieved of the necessity for an emotional power that is probably beyond her, Miss Adams was left free to delight her audience with the waywardness and sweetness of the new Babbie of the play. Miss Adams gave the character a peculiar other-worldly charm that seemed then to have made its way to the stage for the first time, and that lingers in the minds of many

<sup>9</sup> The plays and parts of Maude Adams’ “stardom” are as follows: Lady Babbie in *The Little Minister*, 1897; Mrs. Hilary in *Mrs. Hilary Regrets* (special performance, with John Drew), 1897; Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (supplementary spring season), 1899; Duke of Reichstadt in *L’Aiglon*, 1900; Phæbe Throssell in *Quality Street*, 1901; Pepita in *The Pretty Sister of José*, 1903; Amanda Affleck in *’Op O’ Me Thumb* (in one act), 1905; *Peter Pan*, 1905; Viola in *Twelfth Night* (at Harvard), 1908; Chicot in *The Jesters*, 1908; Maggie Wylie in *What Every Woman Knows*, 1908; Joan of Arc in *The Maid of Orleans* (at Harvard), 1909; Rosalind in *As You Like it* (University of California), 1910; *Chanticleer*, 1911; Leonora in *The Legend of Leonora*, 1913. This list does not include revivals.

<sup>10</sup> *The Wallet of Time*, vol. II.

playgoers as the best remembered achievement of her career. It is probably true that she had even before had parts calling for more varied and difficult work, but the popular success of *The Little Minister* was one of the extraordinary incidents in American theatrical annals.<sup>11</sup>

To vary the task of repeating the same rôle months on end, and (perhaps chiefly) to satisfy her ambitions, Miss Adams essayed, in the Spring of 1899, her first Shakespearean part, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. The result was anything but a complete success, though her thick-and-thin admirers professed themselves pleased. William Faversham was Romeo, and James K. Hackett, Mercutio. Miss Adams as Juliet left much to be desired. She has a gracious, elfish, quite individual charm; she has winning humor and a quiet, directly appealing power of pathos; she is the interpreter *par excellence* of the delicate, touching whimsies of Barrie; but she has not, or had not then, tragic power. Juliet, it need not be said, demands a large share of such power. Young as Shakespeare represents her to be, she is a creature of glamorous beauty and consuming passion. Such Miss Adams could not make her. She could and did make Juliet pleasantly and touchingly girlish, a graceful, fragile, pathetic figure. But *Romeo and Juliet* was not an artistic suc-

<sup>11</sup> Children, corsets and cigars were named after her;—as a matter of fact I know one ten-year-old child who has thirteen dolls, and every one of them bears the same identical name, Maude Adams.”—Acton Davies.



cess (though it was a financial one) and Miss Adams speedily dropped the part. "I have not done what I intended to do," she honestly acknowledged.

But her next part was not, as one might have expected, a return to the medium of her accepted successes. It was even a step further away. Bernhardt, in the spring of 1900, had acted the Duke of Reichstadt in Rostand's play *L'Aiglon*. Reichstadt was the son of Napoleon the Great and Marie Louise of Austria. The play tells the story of his abortive attempt to regain his father's throne. Miss Adams, a few months after Bernhardt's production in Paris, essayed the part in New York, of course in an English version.<sup>12</sup> Like one part she had played before, Juliet, and another she was to play later, Chanticleer, Reichstadt was too large and exacting a part for her. Yet by reason of her own physical characteristics she suggested the weakness and effeminacy of the young Duke, and in the lighter scenes she was pleasing and satisfying. In the more serious scenes—and there are two that require great acting in the tempestuous strain: the Mirror Scene, in which Reichstadt is shown by Metternich the hopeless weakness of his character and the desperation of his cause; and the scene on the battlefield of Wagram, where "the eaglet" is crushed by visions of his father's ruthless career,—in these scenes Miss Adams was interesting and pathetic, but she hardly exhausted the

<sup>12</sup> Prepared by Louis N. Parker and Edward Rose.

possibilities.<sup>13</sup> The production of *L'Aiglon* could not, however, fail to add to her artistic reputation and to her immense popularity, if that were possible.

With *Quality Street*, a delightful, simple, sunshiny play by Barrie in which she was the lovable and thoroughly feminine Phœbe Throssell, and in the far less attractive play *The Pretty Sister of José*, in which she was a Spanish girl, "of delicate, winning sensibility,"<sup>14</sup> Miss Adams returned to the sort of acting which in *The Little Minister* had made her name universally known.

Never, however, before or since, has Miss Adams' popularity risen to such a pitch as it did upon the production of *Peter Pan*. First produced in 1905, it ran for three seasons, and when Miss Adams revived it recently and took it far and wide about the country it proved as popular as ever. It may be, as Mr. Winter

<sup>13</sup> She was at her best in the scene of supplication and child-like blandishment with the old Austrian Emperor. The vein of Miss Adams is domestic and romantic—not tragic. She carried the second act of the play with sustained vivacity and gratifying skill. Possessed of a gentle personality and capable of a piquant behavior, Miss Adams was a sprightly and bonnie lass in *The Little Minister*, and that performance furnished the measure of her ability. As Reichstadt she gave an intelligent performance, on a commonplace level."—William Winter, *The Wallet of Time*.

<sup>14</sup> William Winter. His appreciation of some qualities of the impersonation did not prevent his saying: "Pepita, as impersonated by Miss Adams, was a tenuous damsel, of peevish aspect, who closed her teeth and spoke through them, producing, at times, a strange, nasal sound, as of a sheep bleating."

says, "immeasurably inferior, in fancy and satire, to *Alice in Wonderland*." But then, Mr. Winter found it at times puerile and tedious, and could discern nothing in it but a diversion for children. *That* it certainly was, but the children's ages ran from four to fourscore. It was a matter of common observation, even in that supposed center of case-hardened worldliness, New York, that the audiences were largely of grown-ups, and that stock-brokers, "tired business men," and others who would flee miles from the ordinary "children's play," came not once, but thrice, a dozen times, in some cases, to see the triumph of Peter over Captain Hook. The elfin quality, the gracious charm and warm-hearted humor of Miss Adams' *Peter Pan* may not have been sufficient to make it, as a feat of acting, her most memorable achievement; but play and player have won their way into the public's affections more thoroughly than anything else she has done—more even than *The Little Minister*.

In another Barrie play, *What Every Woman Knows*—produced after the comparatively short life of *The Jesters*, a romantic mediæval play in which she displayed her familiar ability without working any great advance or change—Miss Adams accomplished what remains as probably the most noteworthy acting, *as acting*, of her career. She entered thoroughly into the part of Maggie Wylie—the Scotch woman who, while regaining, in a novel way, her errant husband, demonstrates again "what every woman

knows,"—the dependence of mere man upon woman. The play was a delightful instance of Barrie's gift for dressing human truths in whimsical fancy; Miss Adams, in the well chosen words of Mr. Winter, combined "goodness, tenderness, magnanimity, pride, motherhood, and pity with some little dash of tartness,—and gave a performance which needed only flexibility and more essential Scotch character to make it as entirely enjoyable as it was artistically consistent." <sup>15</sup>

When Maude Adams was announced as Mr. Frohman's choice for Chanticleer in Rostand's barnyard drama of that name, there was much plain-spoken wonder. It was felt by even her most cordial well-wishers that her ambitions and Mr. Frohman's indulgence of them could not well go further. Facetiously expressing this feeling, *Life* announced that Mr. Frohman's next production would be Shakespeare's tragedy of *King Lear*, with Maude Adams in the title part. Chanticleer demands an actor of the somewhat florid style, at least an actor skilled in poetic speech. The "make-up" is as nearly as possible the fac-simile of our old friend the barn-yard rooster, comb, tail feathers, spurs and all. It can easily be seen that an elocutionist, in such a part, is a necessity. It was generally said that the single and obvious choice for

<sup>15</sup> "At the moment when Maggie destroys Shand's written promise of marriage and again at the moment when she gazes on the beauty who has bewitched her husband, Miss Adams attained to the loftiest height she has reached, in the expression of feeling."—*The Wallet of Time*.



Chanticleer was Otis Skinner, who would indeed have been ideal. Still, Miss Adams, somehow, certainly escaped failure. She is fragile and a woman, not a robust man; but her Chanticleer took on, through her intelligence and sincerity, a share of the impressiveness that the part needed, though one felt that Miss Adams could have been spending her ability to better advantage. The apparent perversity that has taken a sweetly feminine, very American woman, of limited powers but sure ability to delight within her proper, modern field, and made her first a heroine of Shakespearean tragedy, then a decadent, disease-stricken youth, then a young mediæval nobleman in masquerade, and later the embodiment, several times life size, of a rooster, has been one of the strange phenomena of the recent American stage. The extenuating circumstances are first that managers are always more or less at a loss for good plays, particularly for a strongly individualized actress; and further that Miss Adams, greatly to her credit, did nothing without casting over it at least the glamour of a fine intelligence and an admirable ambition.

A marvelous exhibition of what Miss Adams and Mr. Frohman, when they put their heads together, could do in the way of contrast to Phœbe Throssell and Maggie Wylie, was the production for a single performance in the great Stadium at Harvard, one night in June, 1909, of Schiller's *Maid of Orleans*. Miss Adams had played *Twelfth Night* in Sanders

Theatre one evening a year before. The *Maid of Orleans* was an outgrowth of the earlier performance and was undertaken at the suggestion of the German department of Harvard. That there were one hundred and fifty mounted knights in full armor, one thousand men-at-arms, two hundred citizens, one hundred and fifty women and children, one hundred and twenty musicians, and ninety singers, besides sixty speaking parts, gives some idea of the magnitude of this unique presentation. In the coronation scene more than fifteen hundred persons were on the improvised Stadium stage. The cost of this single evening's performance, with its specially constructed scenery and long preparation, was tremendous. And Maude Adams planned and carried through the entire proceeding. "This," said one perhaps over-enthusiastic spectator, "is the biggest thing ever undertaken by any woman, except the one she is representing." And through it all Miss Adams was playing the Maid, even to leading, on a great white charger, the troops of France in the battle charge. The spectacular effects—the storm scene, the battle scene, the scene of the coronation—were vastly impressive, though the petite figure and delicate art of the principal actress were often lost in the largeness of her surroundings.

Maude Adams and James M. Barrie seem to have been, artistically, born for each other. At any rate, it is in his plays—*The Little Minister*, *Quality Street*, *Peter Pan*, *What Every Woman*

*Knows*,—that she has deservedly won her fame. The latest in the list is *The Legend of Leonora*, in which she has forsaken Chanticleer's feathers and Peter Pan's breeches once more to don petticoats. It brings Miss Adams back to a dotting public in a part that gives rein to her old time ability as a light *comédienne*. That a portion of this public is more or less shocked to see its beloved Maude Adams playing the part of a murderess—even though Leonora and her crime are amiable unrealities—indicates the strongly personal element in the popularity of the actress.<sup>16</sup>

This personal element has been introduced into the Maude Adams worship solely across the footlights. That is to say, the public knows next to nothing of her as a human being except as her personality is poured into and out of her work. Out of a native shyness as well as out of a desire to avoid publicity except as an actress, she carries her self-effacement off the stage to the last degree. She is never met at social gatherings, she has never addressed meetings or written magazine articles; she is seldom seen on the streets or driving in the park, and the occasions on which she has, in many years, gone to any theatre as one of the audience could be numbered on one's fingers. She dresses with the utmost quietness and with small regard to current styles.

<sup>16</sup> And indicates also, in the same people, a lamentably restricted judgment of the artistic side of what they see on the stage.

But her shrinking from "the general" is, one need hardly say, without trace of a sour attitude toward the world. She is said to be chary of personal friendships, but those who know her best speak glowingly of her bountiful kindness. She has, of course, made a great deal of money. A considerable share of it has gone, unostentatiously, to the relief of the needy. She is said to have a list of pensioners:—old, destitute players, or acquaintances of her early life.<sup>17</sup>

Miss Adams has always taken a keen interest in the mechanical side of the theatre. More than most actresses she knows the intricacies and the artistry of scenery and lighting, and has much to say of them when she is to appear in a new part. She has, indeed, her own office in the Empire Theatre building and there conducts

<sup>17</sup> Frederic Dean has given one or two cases of her bounty: "There used to be an old doorkeeper at the stage entrance of the Empire Theatre. One day he was taken sick and his place was filled by another. Miss Adams learned that the old chap had lost his position and made a hurried search for him, tracing him, at last, to an East Side tenement. It was long after midnight when she found him. He was very ill and was being taken care of by his faithful wife as best she could. Doctors and nurses were immediately summoned and every possible comfort provided; and the next morning, and the next, and the next came Lady Bountiful—and every day, until the sufferer died a month later.

"For sixteen years Robert Eberle was in Charles Frohman's employ as business manager. One year, late in the season, he was taken ill and left in a hospital in South Bend, Indiana. Miss Adams was playing in the West at the time, and hearing of Mr. Eberle's illness—though several hundred miles from the hospital—left her company on Saturday night, went to South Bend, spent Sunday at the sick man's bedside, and, leaving orders for the best of medical treatment, returned to her work just in time to dress for her part on Monday night."



the many details of organizing a production. In adoring a sweet and fragile woman her admirers are likely to forget that Maude Adams is a thoroughly trained woman of the theatre, of tried executive ability.

The sweetness and simplicity of Maude Adams herself and of her acting comes in part, one is tempted to think, from her very real love of nature. She has a New York home—and a quiet retreat it is—but her real abiding place, when her work permits, is at Sandycroft Farm on Long Island, where she owns what may fairly be called an estate. She has there her stables, her kennels, her fields under cultivation, her woods; and she knows the details of farming only less well than the secrets of stagecraft. She has, too, a bungalow in the Catskills. She is fond of riding and of long walks in the country. Books form an inevitable furnishing in all three houses. She has given herself a good schooling in French, and she is on more than speaking terms with the philosophers and poets. She likes foreign travel, and has made several trips to Europe and the near East. She plays well the piano and the harp and when opportunity offers she goes to symphony concerts. Altogether she is a serious-minded devotee of the essential, the beautiful and the simple. She is of course aware of her own great popularity. But the feeling it inspires in her is said by her friends to be one of humility and wonder. And whatever her rank as an artist, she has sent across the footlights her simplicity, her sense

of sweetness and light, to be a beneficent influence. Her picture, cut from a magazine and pinned to the wall of a ranch house in the far West, or of a tenement in the slums of an Eastern city, is a symbol of something good added to American life.

## SOME AMERICAN ACTRESSES OF TODAY

“**T**HERE is no great acting now,” the veteran theatregoer will tell you. “The day of the stars has passed.” He who remembers vividly Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Booth and Madame Janaushek feels that times have changed indeed. And he is quite right. But sometimes he is sure, with Mr. Winter, that they have changed altogether for the worse. And there he is wrong. If it seems true that with the passing from our stage of Madame Modjeska, Miss Rehan and Miss Marlowe the robes of high priestess of our stage, to whom all the people delight to burn incense, grace alone the slender form of Miss Maude Adams, that fact does not necessarily argue a lack of genius in the artists that remain. We are, on the whole fortunately, abolishing the rank of high priestess.

All the women, with one or two exceptions, who are the subjects of the preceding chapters have been out-and-out exponents of the star system. It is an undesirable system, which is not essential to the theatre and which is only a passing phase, though it has lasted a matter of centuries, and though we owe to it many names that make illustrious the annals of the drama. It is

undesirable because it subordinates the play, which first and last should be "the thing," to the interpreter of the play, because it exercises a vicious influence on playwrights who write to clothe personalities rather than their own ideas, and an equally vicious influence on actors who think of plays primarily as opportunities for histrionic exploits. "But," some one says, "did not Shakespeare himself write plays that are obviously for stars?" Well, he certainly wrote plays upon which starship has battened. Like any other good plays, however, Shakespeare's plays are even better when the starship, as such, is left out, as any one will testify who has seen them acted without the extraneous element that is symbolized by enormous type on the play-bill.

To think of the theatre first of all in terms of actors and actresses is, however, natural enough. It is a popular way of looking at the theatre, and it would be idle to expect its total disappearance. And it would be ungrateful. Actors and actresses are public servants and benefactors, to whom recognition and praise are due. But recognition is one thing; starship, with all its adulations,—Bernhardtism,—is another. And there are good reasons for thinking that other aspects of the theatre are also becoming popular.

The early years of the twentieth century have been a period of rapid development in the theatre, a development marked by at least two broad phenomena: first, the growing public



sense of the drama as an art, of which acting is a component part, not the chief end; and, secondly, the revolution in the technique of stage-craft. To sum up the matter in a word, the stage is struggling, rather blindly, to liberate itself from the conventions that intervene between audience and play. As an incident in that liberation, the star system is on its way, not to destruction, for the actor of genius will always remain a compelling figure, but at least to broad modification. Starless casts and repertory companies have been plentiful enough to indicate the beginnings of a strong, new current.

Again, playwriting and acting, hand in hand, have become more realistic, more subtle, more psychological; there are far fewer opportunities for broad effects than in the old days, there is far less of the intense concentration of playwright and audience on a single character and a single actor or actress. It is probable that even if a Bernhardt or a Duse or a Cushman should spring up in our midst she would find effective physical and psychological barriers to an ascension to starship as those illustrious women have known it.

Very briefly indicated, these are some of the phases of the phenomenon that may easily be mistaken by the cherisher of traditions as the passing of first-rate acting. Though it is different in tone and method, and leads less often to extreme heights of public notice, acting to-day succeeds as well in its adaptation to the

newer ideal of the primacy of the play as did the older school in the exaltation of the actor.

It is a rather odd circumstance that while the English stage is rich in its actors and comparatively scantily supplied with excellent actresses, the reverse is true in America, so far as concerns the younger generation. Our civilization seems to breed actresses thickly at home, and to entice them from abroad. When Edward Sothorn, Otis Skinner, David Warfield, Henry Miller, Robert Mantell, John Drew, William Gillette and even Mr. Hackett, Mr. Faverham and Mr. Daly shall have retired from the stage, who is to help Ernest Glendinning and the imported Mr. Lou-Tellegen maintain the honors of their sex? But when Mrs. Fiske and Maude Adams shall have followed Julia Marlowe into retirement, there still will be, even if Ethel Barrymore and Margaret Anglin should regrettably have left the stage, a considerable group of still younger actresses, none of whom may ever achieve stardom as it was once practiced, but each of whom fits with admirable ability into the newer order of things.

Better than almost any one else, Miss Barrymore represents the dangers of the star system. The daughter of one of America's best actors, Maurice Barrymore,<sup>1</sup> and the niece of another, John Drew, she was a marked victim from the beginning. Charles Frohman made her a star in 1900, when she was twenty-one. She had had

<sup>1</sup> Ethel Barrymore was born at Philadelphia, August 15, 1879. Her mother was the actress, Georgie Drew-Barrymore.

a scant half dozen years of training in her uncle's company in America and in Henry Irving's company in England, and had not played more than a dozen parts in all. She was made a star simply on the strength of a pleasing personality, intelligence, a pretty face, and a working grasp of stage behavior.

During the next decade, playing in pieces like *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, *Cousin Kate*, and *Sunday*, she attracted and held a loyal public that liked to see her personality exploited in those comparatively insignificant plays, just as adoring theatregoers throng today to see Billie Burke and Marie Doro, whatever the slenderness and frothiness of the play. But let Miss Barrymore, in an effort to be a real actress, try her hand at submerging herself in an un-Barrymorelike character, in a play of any serious interest, and that adoring public was bewildered and disappointed and remained away from the theatre. Such are the fruits of thinking of the theatre in terms of the actor.

But Miss Barrymore had it in her to be a real actress. Once in a while, prompted by her ambition, she would do something that her fond followers would think was queer. Thus, during this decade, from 1900 to 1910, in the midst of her prosperous playing of popular pieces, she acted at one time or another *Carrots*, a one-act play from the French in which she gave a pathetic picture of the boy-hero; then, at a single plunge, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; then *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire*, a play that Barrie wrote for Ellen

Terry, and in which Miss Barrymore, to the consternation of her peculiar public, appeared as a gray-haired matron; and finally *The Silver Box*, an unrelievedly serious and honest play by Galsworthy, in which she descended to the depths by acting an ordinary scrub-woman.

Not all of these did Miss Barrymore play signally well; her starship, limiting her to a play or two per year, had simply not afforded her the training to become the actress she has since shown herself to be. But in these brief experiments at least she was feeling her way out of the entanglements of theatrical pettiness.

When Miss Barrymore, in January, 1910, appeared in Pinero's *Mid-Channel*, she had married and become a mother. Whether the admirers of her former girlish charm and slenderness liked it or not, she was now inevitably a deeper-natured and more mature woman and, consequently, capable of deeper and better acting. The fact was speedily proved in *Mid-Channel*. The play is a grim tragedy of English middle-class life, in which a fine-natured wife, after a gradual course of unhappy, deteriorating life with a selfish and sensual husband, ends her problems with suicide;—surely not one of the pretty Barrymore parts. "There will be hosts of the 'Barrymore public,' no doubt, who will feel that in *Mid-Channel* they cannot laugh with her," wrote Walter Prichard Eaton. "But to some more thoughtful men and women it is a source of rare satisfaction that at last the promise of that lovely voice and ex-



pressive face has been fulfilled, and you can weep with her, suffer with her, understand through the spell of her acting a little better the sorrows and perplexities of our frail humanity. In short, Miss Barrymore has become an actress. . . . Her many admirers, gathered in force, who evidently knew more about her than they cared about Pinero, were disposed to laugh in the first act during the scenes of her bickerings. But never after that did she allow them to suppose for an instant that they were not watching a serious and passionate study of a woman's tragedy."

After *Mid-Channel*, Miss Barrymore had to be considered as one of the artists of our stage, if she and her managers could only agree to let her remain so. She revived *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire*, and played it with far more feeling and a more convincing sense of maternity than she had shown before; she has played the insurgent wife in Barrie's one-act masterpiece, *The Twelve-Pound-Look*, with a sure-handed mastery of the ironic and subtle that belongs only to a finished actress; she has, most recently of all, acted Madame Okraska, in the dramatization of *Tante*, with a keenness of insight into character and a finesse that showed again how far she had traveled since the days of *Captain Jinks*. Let us hope that henceforth Miss Barrymore's unquestioned talent will not be allowed to expend itself on unworthy material.

Next to Mrs. Fiske, the leading actress of our contemporary stage is undoubtedly Margaret

Anglin,<sup>2</sup> Her training has had a wider range, and her artistry a more varied accomplishment, than those of any other actress on our stage. Born in Canada of a non-theatrical family, she came to New York to study. She is one of our few brilliant actresses who have come to the stage by way of the dramatic schools. In 1894, when she was eighteen, she was Madeline West in Charles Frohman's production of *Shenandoah*. When she was twenty she was playing Ophelia and Virginia in James O'Neill's company, and from that day to this she has been one of America's dependable and versatile stage artists.

A few years ago we thought of her as a powerful emotional actress who had come through an apprenticeship in barnstorming, and an early recognition of merit as Roxane to Mansfield's *Cyrano*, to full measured achievement in *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, *The Great Divide*, and *The Awakening of Helena Ritchie*,—with a large number of plays and parts scattered in between. But of late years she has broadened her art and made secure her place among contemporary actresses not only by plunging wholeheartedly into a campaign in Shakespeare, but by ranging even farther and acting the heroines of Greek tragedy. Miss Anglin is as effective in comedy—witness *Green Stockings* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* as recent instances, and her Lady

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Anglin was born at Ottawa, April 2, 1876. Her father was Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons, and her brother was Chief Justice.

Eastney in *Mrs. Dane's Defence* for an earlier one—as she is in emotional rôles; she has acted in Australia as well as in America; she was the first artist to carry about the country a repertoire of plays set in accordance with the ideals of the new stagecraft; and as Mr. Eaton has said, “as a stage manager she has succeeded in reviving something of the atmosphere of good breeding, of polite comedy, of perfect ensemble and polish, which we associate with the memory of Lester Wallack.” It is an ample, dignified career, now happily at its height, of hard working service to the art of the actress.

When in 1913 Miss Anglin made herself a Shakespearean actress-manager, the size of her repertoire, the general excellence of her interpretations, and the revelation of the beauties of the new stage art that signalized her performances combined to give American theatregoers a new idea of her ability and broadening ambition. The plays were *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*; the scenery in each case was a beautiful example—by Livingston Platt—of the imaginative revolt from old stage conventions that has notably marked the last decade; and Miss Anglin's own women of Shakespeare,—though her *Cleopatra* was a comparative failure and was soon dropped from her repertoire, and though her *Viola* was to a degree lacking in high spirits—were charming and technically admirable impersonations.

In the Greek Theatre of the University of

California at Berkeley, Miss Anglin has acted four of the classic dramas of ancient Greece, —the *Antigone* and the *Electra* of Sophocles, the *Iphigenia in Auris* and the *Medea* of Euripides. Though her training and her speech have always been primarily those of the modern actress, she has revealed in these classic tragedies a simplicity of method and an authority of voice and presence that few actresses, either of England or America, could equal. With Miss Lillah McCarthy presenting so beautifully the women of Greek tragedy at one end of the country, and Miss Anglin at the other, the classics have had a day of real, if brief, glory.

If the roster of American actresses is given a cosmopolitan aspect by the inclusion of the names of Edith Wynne Matthison, Martha Hedman, Hedwig Reicher and Bertha Kalich, all of whom lived many years in Europe, the most striking example of all is Alla Nazimova.<sup>3</sup> She was born in Russia, went to school in Switzerland, studied the violin at Odessa, the drama in Moscow, and after a few years' apprenticeship in her native land and a year at St. Petersburg, she acted with Paul Orleneff's company (of course, in Russian) in London. Coming then to America she played a season in Russian with her compatriots; and then, in June, 1906, having signed a contract to act in English in November of the same year, she set herself to the mastery of the new language, much as Mod-

<sup>3</sup> Alla Nazimova was born at Yalta, Crimea, Russia, June 4, 1879.



Jeska had done thirty years before. She kept her word, and when the appointed time came she acted *Hedda Gabler*, which she followed during the next half-dozen years, with others of Ibsen's plays: *A Doll's House*, *The Master Builder*, *Little Eyolf*, as well as several other plays, like *The Comet*, *The Marionettes*, and *Bella Donna*, in none of which the actress possessed the significance that marked her when she confined herself to Ibsen.

To play first in an obscure hall on the lower East Side, then in two or three scarcely less obscure theatres, and then, a year and a half after her unheralded arrival, to act in a new tongue in one of New York's leading theatres—it all makes one of the most dramatic of careers. If, however, Nazimova is "a tigress in the leash of art," as Julius Huneker called her, an artist must hold the leash, or it becomes too much a circus tigress, going through the expected tricks, but in a cage of which she is always conscious. Nazimova did us a real service in her vivid impersonation of Ibsen's heroines. Mrs. Fiske apart, no one else has done much for Ibsen in this country. But apparently she cannot go on playing Ibsen profitably; her art, which "expresses itself in a continual physical virtuosity which startles and thrills," does not find an outlet in the sort of play English and American dramatists are likely to write; and, as Mr. Ruhl points out, "of late she has drifted far from her simpler beginnings and over-accented the more exotic side of her personality as if determined

to 'run it into the ground.' " Like another actress of striking talent, Nance O'Neil, Madame Nazimova is idle chiefly because she and the dramatists seem unable to meet on a common ground.

The case for the poetic actress is little better. After acquiring in England a thorough grounding in her profession, Edith Wynne Matthison<sup>4</sup> came to America in 1903 and played *Everyman* with a dignity, a charm of voice and person, and a poetic poignancy that made the fifteenth-century "morality" forever memorable for any one who saw it. After brief experiments with Viola, Portia, and Kate Hardcastle, she returned to England, and then, after dividing the intervening years between her old home and her new, she settled more or less permanently in America in 1910, when she joined the company of the New Theatre. She must be regarded as of the American theatre.

Miss Matthison is preëminently a poetic actress. Her moods and methods, her rich and tender voice, her whole training and personality fit her rarely for the realization of the heroines of poetic drama. How truly this is not the age of the poetic drama, however, is shown by the short list of rôles—outside of Shakespeare's heroines—that Miss Matthison has had, at once adapted to her and worthy of her talents. At the New Theatre she played Sister Beatrice in Maeterlinck's play of that name, *The Piper*, and

<sup>4</sup> Edith Wynne Matthison was born at Birmingham, England.

Light in *The Blue Bird*. And the New Theatre was not wholly a response to public taste; it was largely an attempt to foster it. For the rest, Miss Matthison's American appearances (and her English experience was similar) have been distributed among many plays of many kinds, some of them excellent, like *The Great Divide* and *The Servant in the House*, but all of them rather beside the point, so far as Miss Matthison's peculiar talent was concerned. When she played, and beautifully played, Andromache in Mr. Barker's recent production of *The Trojan Women*, she again came briefly into her own.

If Miss Anglin and Miss Matthison almost exhaust our list of first-rate poetic actresses (now that Miss Marlowe has retired), the case is far otherwise with the *comédiennes*. There are two, at least,—Grace George and Laura Hope Crews,—who are practiced adepts, thoroughly at home amid the subtleties of high comedy.

The place of Miss George<sup>5</sup> among American actresses is only partly indicated by the announcement that she is to direct her own theatre in New York. Though she merits that distinction, it is one that is easily within the grasp of the wife of William A. Brady. But it is indeed something to be one of our few actresses who are mistresses of comedy. Miss George made her first appearance on the professional

<sup>5</sup> Grace George was born at New York City, December 25, 1879.

stage (she had previously acted much as an amateur) as long ago as 1894, but it was not until 1907, when she acted Cyprienne in *Divorçons*, that she disclosed her talent brought to its fullness by long and varied training. Playing with her in *Divorçons* was that excellent actor, Frank Worthing, and the effect produced by them remains one of the memorable incidents of American acting.<sup>6</sup> During the dozen years that preceded *Divorçons* and again during the period that has followed, Miss George has been condemned to play in a long succession of comparatively inferior plays. The list is varied only occasionally by brief appearances in genuine high comedy, such as her Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal* at the New Theatre and her Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Taking it all in all, she is best represented, so far, by her Cyprienne, an admirable impersonation, compact with rich humor, naturalness and charm,—and achievement in real comedy. Miss George promises to come into her own, however, with the opening of the theatre in New York of which she is to be the guiding spirit and the chief actress, for, if promise fails not, it is to be a rigorously guarded home of nothing but the best in the realm of comedy.

Like Miss George, Laura Hope Crews<sup>7</sup> has earned by long training and by brilliant ac-

<sup>6</sup> Following the American production, Miss George played *Divorçons* in London.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Hope Crews was born at San Francisco.



complishment the admiration she now wins. She had been a child actress in the far West, and, returning to the stage in her 'teens, had undergone the rigorous training of stock company work in San Francisco and New York for a half dozen years before she attracted any considerable notice. Such an experience in American stock companies, with weekly changes of bill, means either a sinking to a dead level of mechanical acting, or a constantly enlarging technical resource. The latter was the case with Miss Crews. As Mr. Eaton has pointed out, though she has come to be looked upon as an actress of such sunny parts as Polly in *The Great Divide*, and the whimsical heroine of *Her Husband's Wife*, it is because Miss Crews for so long went from such plays as Hoyt's *A Bunch of Keys*, to others like *Magda* and *Hedda Gabler* that she is today not merely an attractive personality, but an actress of complete technical equipment. Such she has again proved herself to be by the finesse of her impersonation of the wife in *The Phantom Rival*. By virtue of the power of consistent impersonation which she brings to bear upon her warmly human heroines, her high spirits and her thoroughly trained resources of humorous suggestion, she has earned a high place as a *comédienne*; but the sincerity and the variety of her art would equip her at a moment's notice to revert to the emotional heroines of a more sober drama.

It is becoming too apparent that we have seen the last of the charming and delicate art of

Annie Russell; the physical power and the emotional intensity of Nance O'Neil's very real talent find their expression only in plays of a Bernhardtian type that to a great extent has gone out of fashion on the American stage; Rose Stahl, after a long career as America's best stock actress, leaped into international fame by a single masterpiece of characterization (in *The Chorus Lady*) which she has not since had an occasion to duplicate; and the charming and well-grounded acting ability of Henrietta Crosman, always condemned to deal with second-rate plays, seems to have run its course, so far as the public is concerned.

To replace these and the other actresses <sup>8</sup> who have dropped from the ranks of active service, or who will, before many years pass, do so, there is, as we have said, no lack of younger women. A stage that can count upon Helen Ware, Margaret Illington, Emma Dunn, Elsie Ferguson, Emily Stevens, Frances Starr, Jane Cowl, Martha Hedman, Doris Keane, Laurette Taylor,

<sup>8</sup> Besides Miss Russell, Miss O'Neil, Miss Stahl and Miss Crosman, these are some of the American actresses of the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, who merit more notice than can be given them here, but whose achievements are recorded in the books named in the bibliography: Viola Allen, Julia Arthur, Blanche Bates, Amelia Bingham, Clara Bloodgood, Mrs. Leslie Carter, Rose Coghlan, Ida Conquest, Maxine Elliott, Virginia Harned, Isabel Irving, May Irwin, Mary Mannering, Clara Morris, Eleanor Robson, Effie Shannon, Mary Shaw and Blanche Walsh. Some in this list, like Miss Irwin, Miss Coghlan and Miss Shannon, are, happily, still active. And Miss Arthur announces her return to the stage.

Irene Fenwick, and Florence Reed is suffering no weakness on its distaff side. If only our accomplished young actors were as numerous! For each of these women is more than a mere personality—she is a real actress, mistress of the tools of her trade.

Like Miss Anglin, Margaret Illington learned the rudiments of her art in a dramatic school. Coming then from Chicago to New York, she was immediately engaged by Daniel Frohman for a part in *The Pride of Jennico*. That was fifteen years ago, and it would be beside the point to rank her with those who are, comparatively, untried beginners. Miss Illington is a practiced player with more than a score of excellent impersonations to her credit; of which Mrs. Leffingwell in *Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots*, Nina Jesson in *His House in Order*, Marie Vovsin in *The Thief*, Maggie Schultz in *Kindling*, and Elinor Shale in *The Lie* are merely the outstanding names. But she is still young and she is one of those who can be counted on to carry on the torch for years to come. "Miss Illington leaves no delicate nuance of expression untouched," has been written of her. "She has great vitality and physical beauty; she has a perfectly secure and accurate dramatic instinct. . . . In two of the finest moments [of *The Lie*] Miss Illington rises to tragic heights. In all of the lighter scenes she is deliciously youthful and piquant. . . . Fleeting glimpses of humor and enfolding sweetness, and then the big frantic outbursts of righteous anger and

superb accusations." In a part of quite another sort, the harassed wife in *Kindling*, Miss Illington "acted the ignorant, dumbly struggling, desperate mother truly, simply, touchingly."

Miss Ferguson is a graduate of the musical comedy chorus, and, for an actress who shows so much ability, her dramatic training has been brief. Only a half dozen rôles had followed her chorus-girls days when she was given a part in *Such a Little Queen*. She was not a star when the play was produced, but not many days had gone by when her managers boldly, and perhaps prematurely, elevated her to starship. Her beauty and intelligence went far to justify her promotion, and when the pleasantries of *Such a Little Queen* and *The First Lady of the Land* were followed by the greater complexities of *The Strange Woman* and *Outcast*, it became plain that Miss Ferguson's emotional truth and sense of impersonation could be those of only a genuine actress. The intellectual note that is strong in her work, and the fluency, versatility and certainty of the technique that she has somehow acquired in her short career, make her the most promising of our younger actresses.

Like Miss Ferguson, Miss Stevens is beautiful, and alive to the finger-tips with the keen intelligence of the modern American woman at her best. Excellent training in her distinguished cousin's company she has followed by pleasing performances of Emmy in *Septimus* and Anne in *Man and Superman*, but of late the plays to



which she has been assigned,—like *The Child* and *The Garden of Paradise*, have failed so lamentably that the light of her talent is in temporary eclipse.

In Helen Ware, America has an actress who, though her art, as so far revealed, is comparatively limited in scope, is in the very first rank of impersonators of highly-colored “character” parts and of the masterful women of modern melodrama. Her vivid gypsy girl in *The Road to Yesterday* impressed American theatregoers when she had been on the stage a half-dozen years, and since then her work in *The Third Degree*, *The Woman* and *Within The Law* have more than reënforced that impression. She is an utterly sincere actress, who plans and executes her characterizations with admirable and convincing consistency.

Emma Dunn’s succession of perfectly limned stage portraits of elderly women; Frances Starr’s achievements as Laura Murdock in *The Easiest Way* and as Dorothy in *The Case of Becky*; Jane Cowl’s Mary Turner in *Within The Law*, an impersonation that took Miss Cowl at a single bound almost to the side of Helen Ware; the beautifully feminine and intelligent acting—in an acquired tongue—of Martha Hedman, who has come to us from Sweden; the charmingly restrained and skillful work of Florence Reed in *The Yellow Ticket*; Doris Keane’s admirably lifelike and subtle impersonation of a prima donna of the sixties in *Romance*; Irene Fenwick’s vivid Lily Kardos

in *The Song of Songs*, and Laurette Taylor's exotic princess in *The Bird of Paradise*, and her delightfully human, humorously pathetic, internationally memorable Peg;—these have hardly had time to become memories. Surely, so far as actresses are concerned, our stage is richly endowed. And not only with native talent. Hedwig Reicher, of German birth and training and an excellent actress of Ibsen's heroines, and Bertha Kalich, who was born in Austria and acted in New York in Yiddish, have both adopted America and the English tongue and, like Alla Nazimova and Martha Hedman, must henceforth be counted among America's actresses. Mimi Aguglia is living in our midst, and acts in Italian when, all too rarely, opportunity presents itself.

As for visitors from England, Marie Tempest, Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Gertrude Elliott are almost as familiarly known in this country as at home; the girlish charm of Phyllis Neilson-Terry, and the ample art of Lillah McCarthy, who is equal alike to the exacting demands of Greek tragedy and Shavian satire, it has recently been the privilege of America to witness; Mary Forbes is a newcomer, an actress skilled in both poetic drama and realistic plays; and the too rare visits of the Irish Players have given us the pungent and stimulating art of Sara Allgood.

This chapter, or rather this list,—it could be little more with so many ladies clamoring for their deserved attention,—has at least made one

thing clear. On the feminine side of the art of acting, the only art in which women compete with men on more than even terms, the American stage is in a healthy condition. It has been said, often with cynical emphasis, that in America the audiences of women condition the whole art of the drama. But it is not only at the box-office that women outweigh the men in their share in our theatre.

## APPENDIX

### THE FIRST ENGLISH ACTRESSES, AND THE CHANGE IN THE ACTOR'S SOCIAL STATUS

The actress, as an established element in the theatre, is comparatively modern. The English stage had been a flourishing public institution for something more than a century when, in the first years of the Restoration, veritable women began regularly to replace those lads and beardless men who in Shakespeare's day enacted stage heroines.

There are, to be sure, fleeting glimpses of women acting in England much earlier in the seventeenth century, while boys were regularly playing women's parts. King James spent immense sums on his court revels, and his Queen, Anne, was both actress and manager—no doubt with much professional coaching. In 1625—the first year of the reign of Charles I—there was a merry round of plays acted at Hampton Court at Christmas time. “The demoiselles,”—who, as Doran surmises, were probably the maids of honor—“mean to present a French pastoral wherein the Queen is a principal actress.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the first actresses in England were amateurs, and among them were two Queens of the Realm! Henrietta Maria was, of course, French, and it was due to this fact, and to her liking for the stage, that actresses from France came to London<sup>2</sup>—doubtless the first pro-

<sup>1</sup> Rutland to Nethersole.

<sup>2</sup> 1629.



fessional actresses to appear there. The fashion—or rather the obvious advantages—of the acting of women's parts by women appears to have commended itself much earlier on the continent than in England. "They have now," contemptuously says Prynne,—the author of *Histrion-Mastix* (1633) and the theatre's best hater,—“their female players in Italy and other foreign parts.”<sup>3</sup>

The French actresses who came to act at Blackfriars may have pleased their countrywoman, the Queen. But they seem to have had, on the whole, a rather hard time. “Glad am I to say,” wrote Thomas Brand, another stout Puritan, “they were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage, so that I do not think they will soon be ready to try the same again.” Prynne was furiously abusive. He calls the actresses by a variety of names, of which “monsters” is one of the mildest.

But to some extent, the idea had taken root, and during the ten years before the closing of the theatres, in 1642, women occasionally replaced the boys and men who passed for heroines. In *The Court Beggar*, a play enacted in London in 1632, one of the characters, Lady Strangelove, says: “The boy's a pretty actor, and his mother can play her part. The women now are in great request.” These early actresses were, however, not regularly employed, their names have not come down to us, and it is correct to say

<sup>3</sup> Women acted in Italy as early as 1560, and actresses appeared in France probably not much later. The earliest French actress of whom there is definite record is Marie Vernier, who acted in Paris, in her husband's company, in 1599. In Spain the practice of substituting boys and men in women's parts seems never to have obtained. Going back to antiquity, it is to be noted that while the Greeks never tolerated actresses on their stage, in Rome occasional women players were by no means unknown.

that professional English actresses appear for the first time, when, in 1660, the theatres were reopened, after their eighteen years' suppression by the Puritans.<sup>4</sup>

There were two companies, Killigrew's and D'Avenant's. Each had its regularly enrolled actresses, whose names are recorded. Among them were Mrs. Corey, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Knipp, the Marshall sisters, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Saunderson, and, a little later, Nell Gwynn.

No one, however, took the trouble to make certain for posterity the name of the first of them to appear. We know that she played Desdemona, in an adaptation of *Othello*, called *The Moor of Venice*; that she was of Killigrew's company; that the date was December 8, 1660, and the place the Red Bull; and that Thomas Jordan wrote for the occasion "A Prologue, to introduce the first woman that came to act on our stage." But who the actress was is not known. Two names are the likeliest: Margaret Hughes, and Anne Marshall. Mrs. Hughes was "more remarkable for her beauty than for her great ability." "A mighty pretty woman," says Pepys of her, "and seems, but is not, modest." She was married later to Prince Rupert, and brought him to the verge of bankruptcy. Anne Marshall, the other chief claimant, was a competent actress of the day, remarkable chiefly for being the daughter of a prominent Presbyterian clergyman.

At first the old practice of giving the women's parts to boys threatened to survive, alongside the new cus-

<sup>4</sup>In the interim D'Avenant had ingeniously circumvented the restrictions placed by Cromwell's government on the theatres, by devising a species of opera. They were really plays, in the grand style, modeled after Italian pieces, and with a musical accompaniment to take the curse off. In one of these, *The Siege of Rhodes*, performed in 1656, two women, Mrs. Edward Coleman and another, played Ianthe and Roxalana.

tom of employing women. For a few years both played the heroines, but the race of actors who could portray women was fast dying out and, owing to a changed public opinion, was not replenished.<sup>5</sup> When, in 1663, the King granted patents to Killigrew and D'Avenant, those managers were virtually instructed to employ none but women to represent female characters: "Whereas"—the royal patents read,—“the women's parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offense, we do give leave that for the time to come all women's parts be acted by women.” In a year or so the “boy-actresses” had virtually disappeared from the stage.

Our old friend Pepys had the pleasure,—undoubtedly a keen one for him,—of seeing some of the earliest appearances of actresses in London. We have it from him that in 1661 he saw women acting in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush*. If he was present at the Red Bull on the eighth of the previous December, when the first English actress walked on, he strangely omits to say so.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Jordan's prologue shows that the “boys” were now sometimes dangerously near middle age:

“Our ‘women’ are defective, and so sized,

You'd think they were some of the guard disguised;

For, to speak truth, men act, that are between

Forty<sup>6</sup> and fifty, wenches of fifteen;

With bone so large, and nerve so incontinent,

When you call DESDEMONA, enter GIANT.”

“Old Chetwood tells a story which amply illustrates the absurdity of the ‘men-actresses.’ King Charles II, he says, coming to the theatre to see *Hamlet* and being kept waiting for some time, sent the Earl of Rochester behind to see what was causing the delay. He returned with the information that ‘the Queen was not quite shaved.’ ‘Odsfish!’ said the King. ‘I beg her Majesty's pardon. We'll wait till her barber has done with her.’”—Lowe's *Betterton*.

Something should be said of the changing conditions in the actress' calling since 1660. As we all know, the complete social recognition of actors and actresses is distinctly modern. Of course, in the nature of things, they were always the objects of acclamation and often admiration; but they were long in attaining real public respect, strange as that seems to an actor-worshipping (or especially actress-worshipping) age.

There was plenty of historical background for the old state of things. The ancients loved their theatre, but their actors did not, as a rule, rank high in public estimation. According to Cicero, at one time any Roman who turned actor was disincorporated and unnaturalized by order of the Censors; and Livy states that players were not thought good enough for common soldiers. The early Christians maintained the same attitude, probably with better reason, for in their day the drama fell into a parlous state. The two councils of Arles excommunicated all players, and in A. D. 424 another church council declared that "the testimony of people of ill-reputation, of players, and others of such scandalous employments, shall not be admitted against any person."

With the rise of the wonderful Elizabethan drama in England the actors attained a measure of respect, mixed, however, with a certain condescension.<sup>6</sup> Later

<sup>6</sup> As seems clear, for instance, from Hamlet's unusual consideration of them. The often-quoted law enacted in the reigns of Elizabeth and James seems, however, to have been directed not against the established city companies, but against the wandering country players. It reads, quaintly enough: "All bear-wards, common players of interludes, counterfeit Egyptians, etc., shall be taken, adjudged, and deemed Rogues and Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars, and shall sustain all pain and punishment as by this act is in that behalf appointed." For a résumé of the phases of the actor's



in the seventeenth century, when actresses began regularly to appear on the English stage, the actor's standing was at least no better. William Mountford, a respectable actor, one of the most accomplished of his day, was killed in a street brawl by Lord Mohun and Captain Hill, two dissolute "gentlemen," who were attempting to abduct the renowned actress, Anne Bracegirdle. Mohun was tried in 1692 by the House of Lords, and though he was flagrantly guilty, he was acquitted, 69 to 14. During the hearing one nobleman could not understand why so great a fuss should be made about so small a matter and said that "after all, the fellow was but a player, and players are rogues." And of the period immediately following, John Fyvie says: "In the earlier part of the eighteenth century anybody might insult an actor with impunity; and if an actor were thrashed by a person of quality neither he nor anybody else would have dreamed that he had any right to retaliate."<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Johnson's comments have been quoted as typifying the attitude which even in Garrick's day, a man of intellect could maintain toward the player's profession,<sup>8</sup> though it is to be noted that not even in the lack of social position see John Fyvie's "Comedy Queens of the Eighteenth Century."

<sup>7</sup> "Of course, in the theatrical profession, as in every other, there have always been exceptional individuals whose characters and abilities (especially if they managed to acquire a little wealth) have raised them into the highest society of their time. But in the case of actors it was always quite apparent that they were only there in sufferance, and were tolerated because they were amusing. It was thought a stinging satire, for example, when 'Junius,' incidentally addressing Garrick, wrote: 'Now mark me, *vagabond*; keep to your pantomimes or be assured you shall hear of it.'"

<sup>8</sup> "Goldsmith having said, that Garrick's compliment to the Queen, which he introduced into the play of *The Chances*, which he had altered and revised this year, was mean and

Doctor's distinguished circle were his prejudices generally shared. And Johnson himself, it will be remembered, felt honored to receive a visit from the celebrated Mrs. Siddons. "At all periods of his life, Johnson used to talk contemptuously of players," says Boswell, "for which, perhaps there was formerly too much reason from the licentious and dissolute manners of those engaged in that profession. It is but justice to add," Boswell goes on, "that in our own time such a change has taken place, that there is no longer room for such an unfavorable distinction."

A century had, indeed, seen a change. In 1660, when actresses invaded the theatre, there was a long road to travel before the actor could be thought of as he is today,—innocent of social stigma until proved guilty. It was then the other way about,—he be-

gross flattery; Johnson: '... as to meanness (rising into warmth), how is it mean in a player—a showman—a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling, to flatter his queen?' (1773).

"He (Foote) mentioned, that an Irish gentleman said to Johnson, 'Sir, you have not seen the best French players.' Johnson: 'Players, Sir! I look on them as no better than creatures set upon tables and joint-stools to make faces and produce laughter, like dancing dogs.'—'But, Sir, you will allow that some players are better than others?' Johnson: 'Yes, Sir, as some dogs dance better than others.' (1775).

"I wondered (said Johnson) to find Richardson displeased that I 'did not treat Cibber with more *respect*. Now, Sir, to talk of *respect* for a *player*' (smiling disdainfully). Boswell: 'There, Sir, you are always heretical; you never will allow merit to a player.' Johnson: 'Merit, Sir, what merit? Do you respect a rope-dancer, or a ballad-singer?' Boswell: 'No, Sir; but we respect a great player, as a man who can conceive lofty sentiments, and can express them gracefully.' Johnson: 'What, Sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back, and a lump on his leg, and cries, "I am Richard the Third"?' (1777).—Boswell's "Life of Johnson."

longed to an outcast class, until he proved himself deserving of exceptional consideration.

Naturally, when women came to join the actors' ranks, they shared more than to the full the social disadvantages attaching to the calling, simply because they *were* women; for, as is well known, it is a queer twist of the ingrained chivalric attitude toward the sex that when a woman ranges herself with men of a doubtful class she is accorded a double portion of the disfavor in which that class may be held. In any event, the first century of English actresses saw them, for the most part, doing their best to justify the stigma. Anne Bracegirdle was notorious in her day, not for lapses from virtue, but actually for leading a measurably pure life. So singular, in her day, was the actress who was not the mistress of some one her social superior that virtuous "Bracey" was hailed as a phenomenon. A number of lords and gentlemen once met round a festive board and pledged a large purse to be offered to her as a tribute to her rare chastity.<sup>9</sup> Her sister actresses, and many who were to follow in the eighteenth century, were, in many instances, openly the mistresses of lords and other "fine gentlemen." It seems superfluous to say of the average nineteenth century actress that her standards of life were, in general, far different from those of her earlier sisters; and the fact is of much importance in its direct bearing on one of the most interesting changes that have occurred in the realm of the theatre: the improvement in the social status of the actor and actress.

For another cause of that change we may look to

<sup>9</sup> And even of Bracegirdle, the incomparably virtuous, certain doubts exist. Mountford is thought by some to have been a favored lover; and later Congreve, the poet, was accounted the actor's successor.

the general dramatic awakening that characterized the latter part of the nineteenth century,—the vitalization of the theatre as the home of an art worthy the study and appreciation of the best minds. In 1660 and for many years later the English-speaking theatre, at least, was not *that*.

Until fairly recent times the acting class was recruited mainly from those who were either born to it or who drifted into it more or less as a matter of chance. Here, too, the nineteenth century saw a change. Partly as a cause and partly as a result of the improved social standing of the actor, ambitious men and women of good family in increasing numbers adopted the stage as a profession.

Again, the latter-day recognition of the stage found a significant expression, in England, in the knighting of a succession of distinguished actors and dramatists: Henry Irving, Squire Bancroft, Arthur Wing Pinero, John Hare, Charles Wyndham, George Alexander, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Johnston Forbes-Robertson. In their own country, and, as one may as well admit, in America too, the knighting of actors could not fail further to dignify the calling.

All of these causes have acted and interacted, through the years, to help bring the actor and the actress to a point of public interest and esteem that is reached by few of the world's "authentic benefactors." Most important of all, however, as a cause of their progress to something very like adulation has been the increasingly strong position of the theatre as the artistic meeting ground of all the people. The drama of 1660 was the amusement of a restricted class; now it is the universal art. Its skilled exponents, affected by a strong general interest, cannot fail to receive,—unless they willfully reject it—the respect and admiration of their contemporaries.



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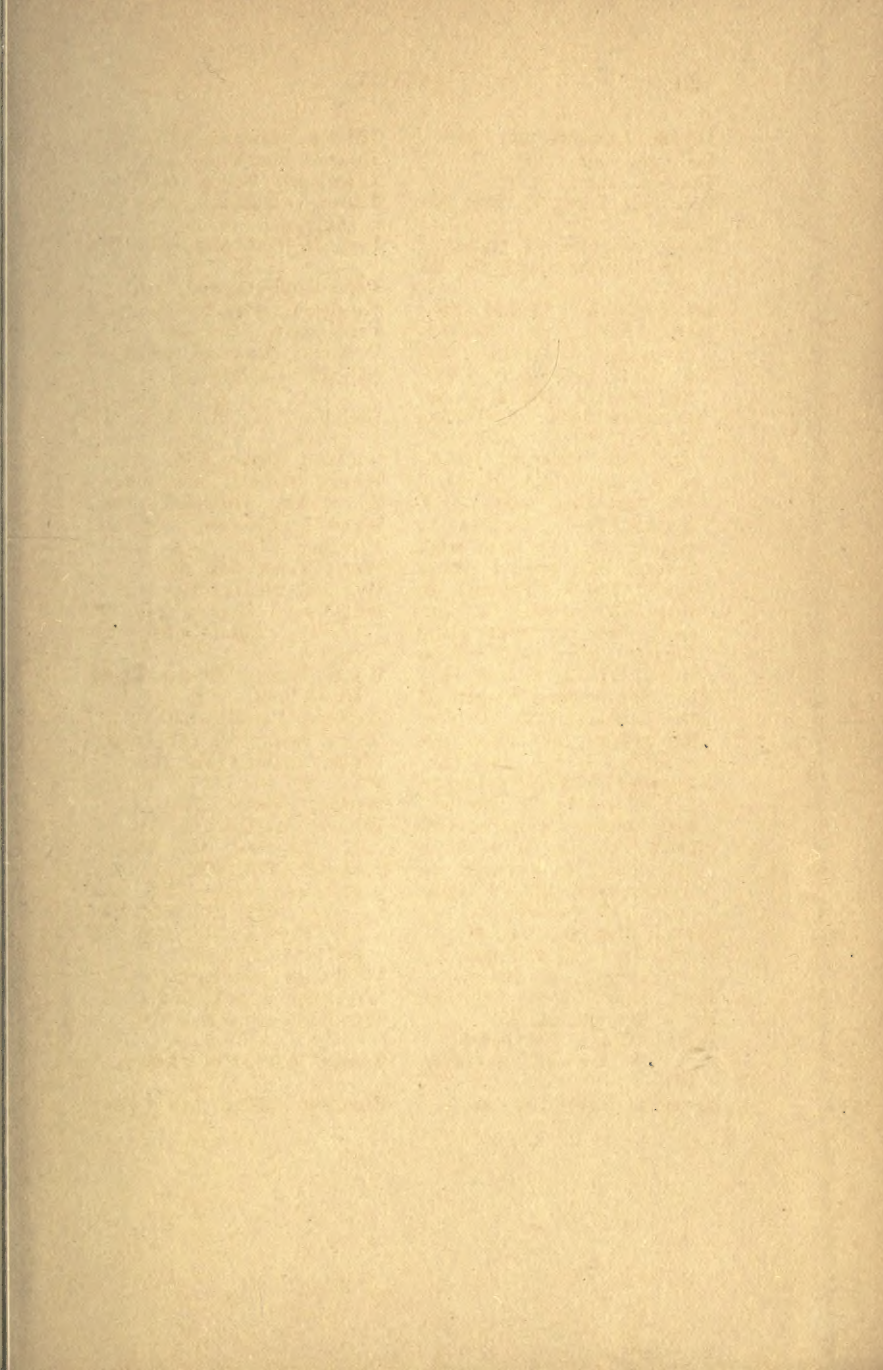
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